



Photo by Dan Walker

Excellence in Wildlife Stewardship Through Science and Education

Number 177 • July 2013

TEXAS CHAPTER OF THE WILDLIFE SOCIETY

WWW.TCTWS.ORG

EXECUTIVE BOARD

PRESIDENT, *Matt Wagner*

PRESIDENT ELECT, *David Hewitt*

VICE PRESIDENT, *Raul Lopez*

SECRETARY, *Richard Heilbrun*

BOARD MEMBER AT LARGE,

Jennifer Korn

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, *Doug Slack*

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT: *Matt Wagner*.....1

TEXAS FLORA AND FAUNA: Dan Walker.....2

THOUGHTS FROM THE WILD: *Doug Slack*.....4

TCTWS WILDLIFE CONSERVATION CAMP.....5

SW SECTION NEWS.....6

49TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE AWARDS.....10

UPCOMING MEETINGS & ANNOUNCEMENTS.....15

EDITORS, RACHEL A. LANGE

AND MARK J. LANGE

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 (Rachel Lange, gundog.dressage@gmail.com) by the 15th of the preceding month. Change of e-mail address should be submitted online through the Address Change Form or directly to the Treasurer. 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



Your Chapter Board is making plans to attend the summer board meeting at the Welder Wildlife Foundation on Friday, July 19. I'm looking forward to joining them, as well as 25 wildlife campers in South Texas. Many exciting developments are taking place as we prepare for our 50th year celebration in Austin. Not the least among them is preparation for the inaugural year of the James G. Teer Conservation Leadership Institute. Dr. Teer was the first President of the Texas Chapter of The

Wildlife Society and an Aldo Leopold Memorial Award Winner, the highest honor bestowed on wildlife professionals by The Wildlife Society. Dr. Teer was an innovator whose expertise was in demand statewide, nationally, and internationally. He was a leader in acknowledging and proclaiming the critical role private landowners play in wildlife management. In continuing this legacy, there is a need for a Texas-based leadership program for young biologists, as well as those entering the early management stages of their careers. The often unique conservation issues in the Lone Star State require innovative public-private partnerships from which long term solutions can be found. Examples of some of those solutions include the Wildlife Tax Valuation, the Landowner Incentive Program, Regional Habitat Conservation Plans, and Wildlife Management and Prescribed Burn Associations. These initiatives, and many others not yet developed, will be needed when faced with a future full of evermore complex natural resource issues in a privately owned landscape. By investing in the emerging wildlife leaders today, future dividends will be realized in the years ahead, in Texas, as well as beyond the state lines. Dr. Selma Glasscock is leading a team of at least a dozen Texas Chapter members to pull this leadership institute together. Your help is needed in fully funding the institute.

Although Texas legislators are still working in the special session, the state budget includes much needed help for wildlife in Texas. Exceptional items totaling over \$7 million over the next 2 years will be added to the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department's Wildlife Division budget for quail management and research, Eastern wild turkey restoration, growing public hunting areas, expanding prescribed fire on the landscape, recovering threatened and endangered species, and other priorities. In addition, Texas AgriLife will receive \$2 million for initiatives to address the decline of bobwhite quail. These funds, coupled with an estimated 30% increase in federal funds from the Pittman-Robertson Act, will expand the state's capacity to manage our precious natural resources. Of course, the over-riding concern in the foreseeable future is the persistent drought plaguing our state, and much of the nation. Despite the recent rains in many areas, statewide, lakes are averaging 67% full. Many lakes in the western half of the state are below 10%. Voters will have an opportunity to decide whether \$2 billion from the state's coffers is a good investment in meeting Texas's future water needs. Remember that while meeting the needs of a thirsty population, water for the environment must be a part of any long term plan.

Thank you all for your continued dedication to our chapter, and the wildlife profession. It is the collective effort of us all that will propel us into the future, and resolve the natural resource issues facing us today, and in the years to come!

Matt Wagner, President

TEXAS FLORA AND FAUNA



The wildfire of March 2008 in Dimmit and La Salle Counties in South Texas was a catastrophic event that scorched the landscape. The fire started on a private ranch south of FM 133. Temperatures that day were flirting with the century mark, relative humidity was in the single digits and there was a stiff southeast wind. When a fire ignites in South Texas under those conditions you don't try to put it out, you just have to let it burn until conditions improve enough to take action. The fire initially swept through the Chaparral Wildlife Management Area (WMA) in two head fires then flanked and back-burned through the rest of the WMA. The intensity of the fire was exacerbated from dense stands of the invasive exotic bufflegass. The fire scorched around 65,000 acres, including 95% of the 15,200 acre Chaparral WMA. The fire was hot enough to top kill a lot of the brush, and even to completely kill brush in some areas. There were piles of ash where large shrubs once stood, with holes in the ground where the fire burned out the stump and roots. Most critters were able to get ahead and around the fire, but what about the "little guys" that can't run, fly or burrow their way to safety?

Certain groups of the herpetofaunal community suffered from direct effects of the wildfire. Texas tortoises were still in hibernation at that time of year. Unlike the other two tortoises in the United States, Texas tortoises do not construct burrows. They will make a shallow pallet with

half of their carapace protruding above the substrate, hibernating during the winter (if South Texas even has winters) mostly exposed to the elements. When the wildfire swept through, most of them were exposed to the heat. Afterwards, the landscape was littered with carcasses of burned tortoises. The year of the fire we saw a 98% drop in capture numbers of tortoises. Capture numbers are slowly increasing, but Texas tortoise life history (four eggs/clutch) precludes them from a speedy recovery. Texas horned lizards fared a little better. When they hibernate, they bury themselves just below the surface. Numbers were down after the fire, but are climbing. Unlike the tortoise, horned lizards can lay large quantities of eggs in one clutch (40+ /clutch have been documented at the Chaparral WMA). Western diamondback rattlesnakes were also impacted by the fire. They hang out in woodrat middens for food and shelter. Woodrats construct middens out of dried sticks and cactus pads. When the wildfire came through, those piles of "kindling" had no chance of making it through, and most if not all of the inhabitants inside were cooked. Rattlesnake capture numbers dropped from 100+ /year pre-fire to about a dozen in each of the subsequent years. The only snakes that are encountered now are large adults; there is no evidence of reproduction since the fire. The scarcity of rattlesnakes has affected the Texas indigo population. Texas indigo snake captures were the highest the year after the fire. However most of them were very emaciated. Diet samples suggest their diet had shifted



away from rattlesnakes (their main food source pre-fire) to a more diverse diet that consisted of smaller snakes, a tortoise and even another indigo snake (the first instance of cannibalism we have seen in this species on the Chaparral WMA). So with the absence of their main prey item, indigos had to shift foraging strategies in order to survive.

In searching for new sources of food and shelter, indigos were out and exposed more, making them easier to find. Most are proving to be successful as captured indigos for the past two years are fat and appear healthy.

Fire is a natural component to the South Texas landscape,

TEXAS FLORA AND FAUNA

so a little rain should put you back in business, right? Well down here if you are not currently in a drought, it's right around the corner. The Chaparral WMA received 16" of rain through the summer after the fire, which helped start the recovery process. But then starting in the fall of 2008 we received 7" over the next 11 months, with record high temperatures during the summer of 2009. Critters that weren't affected directly by the fire were hit hard afterwards. The snake community has had a downfall after their food sources (mostly rodents) were wiped out in the wildfire. With the lack of rain, rodents struggled to make a comeback. Even in good rainfall years, rodent numbers are still down, with species richness still very low. Snakes that rely on small mammals as their main food source have had a hard time recovering. Another group of animals that has been greatly affected by years of drought have been the frogs and toads. Capture data suggests that their numbers are declining, and we are not seeing the large explosions of Texas toads, Couch's spadefoots or Great Plains narrowmouth toads that we once did after a good thunderstorm. It seems the time between high rainfall events is getting longer, and the anurans can't catch a break with this ever-present drought in South Texas.

The effects of the wildfire will probably continue to be



noticeable for 20-30 years down the road. This presents an excellent research opportunity. Drought has and will continue to play a role in South Texas and in the recovery from the wildfire. So, is burning bad for all of these small critters? Not if done in a mosaic or in patches. A 65,000 acres swath of burned country with little to no unburned patches of habitat is bad. Timely rains, improved habitat for food and reproduction and immigration from unburned areas are the keys to recovery of the herpetofauna at the Chaparral WMA.



THOUGHTS FROM THE WILD

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

Well I waited until the 83rd Legislature was finished to report on our efforts to support wildlife and the natural heritage of Texas. It seems as though the legislature plans to spend more time in Austin after all. I don't think that any news will come on the wildlife front in the second special session, so here goes.

We made an effort to leverage the impact of the Texas Chapter on conservation issues in Texas. For instance, we continue to be an active member of Texas Outdoor Partners (TOP) with Jim Cathey serving as a board member and representing the Texas Chapter. I represent our Chapter on a Texas Animal Health Commission Advisory Committee on maintaining exotic wildlife in captivity. Further, I have worked with a loose assemblage of wildlife biologists and managers, Texas Wildlife Association members, Texas and National representatives of the Quality Deer Management Association, and veterinarians. Many of the members of this association are members of the Texas Chapter. These individuals testified for themselves and in some instances representing their associated groups before House and Senate committees on numerous pieces of legislation. The general focus of my testimony has been to keep Texas Wildlife Wild! I often reminded House and Senate members of committees about the "public trust status of native wildlife in Texas."

Here are some examples of legislation that Texas Chapter members commented on (in person or by letter): SB 820 "Due Process" for deer breeders; HB 2092 transfer of responsibility for regulating deer breeding from TPWD to the Texas Animal Health Commission; HB 2433 relating to the timing of the release of breeder deer; HB 1616 sale of venison; HB 2150 classification of Elk as exotic animals; HB 2659 requirements for Mule Deer management permits; HB 3037 restricts the sale of free-ranging longhorn cattle from Big Bend Ranch and State Park; and HJR 135 that ensures that funds collected

for the voluntary purchase of license plates (e.g. TPWD Horned Lizard plates) will go to TPWD.

Speaking on behalf of Texas' wildlife and supporting laws and rules that protect our national heritage is good for the soul. We will all need to stand up and be counted so look for opportunities. Our mission is to ensure that our rich natural heritage of plants and animals are conserved for future generations of Texans. Although we may be targets of hate-filled "fact sheets" that argue that the North American Model of Wildlife Management and the Public Trust Doctrine are outmoded, and don't apply in today's environment, whenever possible stand up for keeping Texas' Wildlife Wild!



Doug Slack
Austin, TX 78739
Phone:979.324.3266
dslack.tctws@gmail.com

CHAPTER BUSINESS



TEXAS CHAPTER OF THE WILDLIFE SOCIETY WILDLIFE CONSERVATION CAMP

The 19th annual Wildlife Conservation Camp takes place this month, at the Welder Wildlife Foundation July 14-20.

High school students who visit the Welder can look forward to an amazing week filled with exiting hands on outdoor activities including habitat assessment and management techniques, plant and wildlife identification, tracking, mist netting and small mammal trapping, shooting sports, kayaking and much more. Board members will have the opportunity to engage with these future colleagues during their summer Board Meeting, which will also take place at the Welder. Perhaps most importantly, students can discover their own personal land and conservation ethic throughout the week.

We all understand the importance of reaching out to the younger generation. This camp is designed to show these students the critical role they play in conservation and the impact their actions can have. Most importantly, it is an opportunity to get students excited about the great outdoors! The Wildlife Conservation Camp has proven its effectiveness year after year and we are looking forward to another incredible camp.

CHAPTER BUSINESS

HIGHLIGHTS FROM SOUTHWEST SECTION

Submitted by Carol Chambers, TWS Council Representative

I hope many of you are out and enjoying summer in the field; I've certainly been out a lot plus my husband and I just got a new dog who turns out to be a great field assistant. Here are some updates from TWS and the Southwest Section. Council met in late March and Ken Williams joined the meeting as our new Executive Director. We will be revising the strategic plan prior to the October TWS annual meeting in Milwaukee (Oct 5-10; <http://wildlifesociety.org/>). US Fish & Wildlife Service (FWS) Director Dan Ashe visited with Council and emphasized the importance of the relationship between the FWS and TWS. Hopefully more federal employees will be able to participate fully in TWS leadership roles and meetings. President Kessler felt that it is an opportune time to create linkages with colleagues in Mexico. She was contacted by Gabriel Arachea, Past President of the Mexican Wildlife Society which started as a chapter of TWS so we will hope to develop stronger relationships south of our border. The Leadership Institute (LI) received a grant from the Dallas Safari Club and from TWS affiliates like Arizona, the Southwest Section, and Texas Tech University Natural Resources Management. Ten participants were accepted into LI this year with two from the Southwest Section: Sarah Hamer, Assistant Professor, Texas A&M University and Rachel Williams, Regional Landowner Relations Specialist, Arizona Game and Fish Department. We continue to look for support for Native American travel grants. TWS Fellow Awards were given to two members from the Southwest Section: Leonard Brennan (TX; among his many TWS contributions he served as Editor-in-Chief of Wildlife Society Bulletin and is at the Caesar Kleberg Wildlife Research Institute at Texas A&M University - Kingsville), and H. Reed Sanderson (AZ; served in many roles in the Arizona Chapter and at the national level). The captive cervid breeding issue continues to draw public interest. Check out and share the fact sheet from the TWS Deer Breeding Ad Hoc Committee: <http://joomla.wildlife.org/Canada/images/captive%20deer%20breeding%20web.pdf>.

Don't forget to get into Facebook or Twitter (or both). TWS Twitter followers have really taken off so sign up for a Twitter account and see what's going on. The Southwest Section now has 140 likes on its Facebook page. Job posts reach more followers so we'll continue to post those. Check us out at The Wildlife Society SOUTHWEST SECTION CHAPTERS HUB (<HTTPS://WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/PAGES/THE-WILDLIFE-SOCIETY-SOUTHWEST-SECTION-CHAPTERS-HUB/205755042835210>). WHETHER YOU LIKE TO TWEET, FACEBOOK, OR USE LINKEDIN, USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IS ON THE RISE AND CAN HELP US ALL CONNECT MORE.

Southwest Section Representative (2012)
Carol L. Chambers
Box 15018, School of Forestry
Northern Arizona University
Flagstaff, AZ 86011
FEDEX: 200 E. Pine Knoll Room 116
Phone: (928) 523-0014 Fax: 928-523-1080
Email: Carol.Chambers@nau.edu



CHAPTER BUSINESS

CALL FOR NOMINATIONS EXCELLENCE IN WILDLIFE CONSERVATION AWARDS

Deadline for all nominations is November 1st, 2013

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 5-point bullet statement explaining why the nominee is deserving of the award, along with curriculum vitae of the nominee (if possible) to: Gene T. Miller, 712 Foster Lane, Canyon, Texas 79015; 806/655-9416, gmiller@nwtf.net and electronic submissions are preferred.

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 outstanding achievements during the course of their career with natural resource management and conservation. Please submit a 5-point bullet statement explaining why the nominee is deserving of the award, along with a curriculum vitae of the nominee (if possible) to: Gene T. Miller, 712 Foster Lane, Canyon, Texas 79015; 806/655-9416, gmiller@nwtf.net and electronic submissions are preferred.

Land Stewardship Award:

The Excellence in Wildlife Conservation Committee is soliciting nomination for the Land Stewardship Award. The Land Stewardship Award recognizes individual landowners or other appropriate individuals for their land stewardship and wildlife conservation efforts. Please submit a 1 page letter of nomination with supporting materials and 2-3 high resolution photos explaining why the nominee is deserving of the award to: Gene T. Miller, 712 Foster Lane, Canyon, Texas 79015; 806/655-9416, gmiller@nwtf.net and electronic submissions are preferred.

Criteria for Award Recipients:

Educator of the Year Award

Recognizes individuals for excellence in the development and dissemination of natural resource information to students, landowners, and others. Examples include, but are not limited to, university professors, extension personnel, and agency personnel. Recipients of this award should be current or past members of the Texas Chapter.

Outstanding Achievement Award

Recognizes individuals or teams who have made outstanding contributions to the interests of the Texas Chapter. These contributions might include noteworthy research, development of outstanding outreach programs, or application of conservation principals. Recipients of this award should be current or past members of the Texas Chapter. If the award is given to a group, then the key individual(s) should be members of the Texas Chapter, but it is not necessary for the entire team to be members.

Land Stewardship Award

Recognizes landowners or managers who have been instrumental in the development, application, and promotion of sound wildlife habitat management practices on their land. Special consideration is given to those individuals who, through their leadership, have set an example of hard work and dedication to the wildlife resource. Preference will be given to those who are members of the Texas Chapter, but membership in the Texas Chapter is NOT mandatory to receive this award.

CHAPTER BUSINESS

WE WANT TO KNOW!

About members' upcoming articles, activities, honors, and awards

We would like to keep our membership aware of colleagues in the news- if you have an in-press article, or have recieved a professional honor or award, tell us about it!

Are you putting together a workshop for colleagues or the public? Share it here!

Send information for publication on Facebook to Mark Lange (mark.lange@tpwd.state.tx.us). Links to publications and other news can also be shared on our Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Texas-Chapter-of-the-Wildlife-Society/200836666606716>).



UPCOMING MEETINGS & ANNOUNCEMENTS



TEXAS CHAPTER OF THE WILDLIFE
SOCIETY
50TH
ANNUAL MEETING
FEBRUARY 19-22, 2014
AUSTIN, TEXAS
www.txchapter50th.com



JOIN US
ON OUR
TEXAS CHAPTER OF THE WILDLIFE
SOCIETY FACEBOOK PAGE!

[HTTP://WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/
PAGES/TEXAS-CHAPTER-OF-THE-
WILDLIFE-SOCIETY](http://www.facebook.com/pages/Texas-Chapter-of-the-Wildlife-Society)

