

# Bee County Wildlife Management Association



*Enhancing Quality and Quantity of Wildlife Habitat and Populations in Bee County, Texas*

## March-April 2006 Newsletter

### Good for a grin...

*Most politicians are like Slinkies ... not really good for anything, but you still can't help but smile when you see one tumble down the stairs.*

*Health nuts are going to feel stupid someday, lying in hospitals dying of nothing.*

*"If there is no hell, a good many preachers are obtaining money under false pretenses."*

William A. Sunday

### The Cowboy & The Preacher

A pompous preacher was seated next to a cowboy on an airplane flight. Soon after takeoff drink orders were taken. The cowboy asked for whiskey and soda, which was brought and placed

### NEWSLETTER DELAYED

The best laid plans... This newsletter was originally due out on March 15, in time for our April field day on food plots. Due to the drought (and no food plots) the board decided to move the Field Day to May and delay the newsletter accordingly. Unfortunately, there is still a drought, no food plots, and no field day. We decided to give up and publish the newsletter anyway. Sorry it is late.

### MAY MEETING

Our May 19 meeting will be on Managing Wildlife and Habitat in Drought Conditions. Guest speaker will be Range Specialist Stan Reinke from the NRCS office in Corpus Christi. Stan was instrumental in helping us get the Coastal Bend Prescribed Burn Association started and is well qualified for this topic.

We are also asking members to share things they have done to manage their ranches, cattle and wildlife during this and previous droughts. We encourage you to bring slides, photographs and video tapes of anything you have done. We will make provisions for a VCR/TV, slide projector and what ever else you might require if you will call 361-362-0430 to let me know what you need.

One of the benefits of an organization like BCWMA is being able to share ideas and to learn from each other. Many members have little more than bare ground at this time, so if you have de-stocked and/or managed so you are not in that condition you should bring photos to show those results. Once droughts break it is easy to forget the lessons we "learned" during it. Hopefully this meeting will reinforce some of those lessons and show us that being prepared for the next time will save us time, money and misery. We may also learn ways to mitigate the damage this time.

We will meet at the Bee County Exposition Center from 7:00 pm to 8:30 pm. Invite a guest, potential new members and all your friends.

### 2006 ANNUAL MEETING REPORT

Over 130 people attended our annual meeting in February. Four days before the meeting we had sold only 54 tickets, but on the day of the meeting, and the day before, we sold over 50. Needless to say, with that limited notice we had trouble increasing the quantity of food available. We thought we had it covered but four or five people did not get a main course and had to settle for only side dishes. Hopefully next year more people will sign up earlier. The Board has decided that in the future we will have different prices for advance sale tickets and tickets sold the week of the meeting. We apologize to those of you that missed the full meal.

On the bright side, we were delighted with the turn out; last year we had 85 to 90 people in attendance. The meeting room at the college worked out very well, the food was excellent, and Bill Armstrong from the Kerr Wildlife Management Area gave a great presentation. Over \$700 in door prizes were awarded, we elected four new board members, and we signed up several new members. Best I could tell a good time

before him. The flight attendant then asked the preacher if he would also like a drink. He replied in disgust, *"I'd rather be savagely attacked by a brazen whore, than let liquor touch my lips."* The Texas cowboy then gave his drink back to the flight attendant and said, *"I didn't know we had a choice."*

*"I believe in luck: how else can you explain the success of those you dislike?"*

Jean Cocteau

*"The older I grow the more I distrust the familiar doctrine that age brings wisdom."*

H. L. Mencken

### **Food for thought...**

*"On criticism, remember that nobody will ever get ahead of you as long as he is kicking you in the pants".*

Walter Winchell

*"The chains of habit are too weak to be felt until they are too strong to be broken."*

Samuel Johnson

*"I would rather be able to appreciate the things I have than to have things I am not able to appreciate."*

Elbert Hubbard

was had by all.

### **2006 ELECTION RESULTS**

Our board of directors has nine members, and when we formed the Association two years ago the terms of the original directors were staggered so that three had one year terms, three had two year terms and three had full three year terms.

Four directors were elected this year.

Ken Langford is a new director elected for a three year term.

Pat True and Larry Jones just completed their original two year terms and were re-elected to three year terms.

Alvin Rubottom was elected to fill the remaining two years of Van Bruns' term after Van moved out of Bee County.

### **BOARD ELECTS NEW OFFICERS**

Each year following the general election, the new board elects officers to serve for the following year. The following were elected at the March 3, 2006 Board Meeting to serve as officers for 2006: Pat True, President, Tom Keller, Vice President and Program Chairman, and Bill Frank, Secretary-Treasurer

### **AREA TPWD BIOLOGIST ARRIVES**

Brad Porter has replaced Macy Ledbetter as the TPWD Biologist for Bee, Live Oak, and McMullen Counties. Brad can be contacted at P.O. Box 117, Three Rivers, TX 78071, phone 361-786-3872, email: [porter.bradtpwd@gmail.com](mailto:porter.bradtpwd@gmail.com) Brad is covered up with work and still trying to get his feet on the ground in his new job so have patience if it takes a little while for him to get with you. Many of us met Brad at the annual meeting and he seems to be a sharp and personable young man that we think will be a great asset to us in the future.

### **GAME MANAGEMENT IN STRESSFULL TIMES**

A recent Corpus Christi Caller Times article mentioned that the period from August 2005 to date had the lowest recorded rainfall this century, about 5 inches, if I recall correctly, with one similar period in the early 1900's just over 5 inches. I have measured less than 3 inches in the Hwy 202 Medio Creek area for the same period. The A & M Research Station on Hwy 59 East of Beeville recorded 4.59" for August 1, 2005 to April 20, 2006.

Talk in the local coffee shops and feed stores these days consists of a lot of (justified) whining and moaning about the drought, the shortage of grass and hay, and the impossibly high costs of trying to maintain a cattle herd. Perhaps the only good news is that cattle prices are still good, even in the face of heavy herd reductions and liquidations, and when was the last time that happened? All the forced herd reductions I remember were accompanied with depressed cattle prices, so there is some good news. With no significant rain forecast for the next few months it seems like a smart time for many of us to be out of the cattle business and to be out before cattle prices take a dive.

Our wildlife is also under great stress, especially on ranches where cattle stocking rates have been high and/or cattle are still being held. Times are tough for all animals right now, even on well managed properties, although they will have some fair native browse, even in these conditions. Fawn survival rates were already looking poor for Bee County last fall, and things have gotten worse since. Turkey hens are currently nesting, and with poor cover and food hard to come by they too will have a rough time. There are things you can do to help, although if you are still feeding cattle I know you are wondering how you are going to pay for it.

Deer feeders should in use now, not shut down, and filled with protein, not corn. Corn provides energy and deer eat it like a kid eats candy, and for the same reason, but it is not doing them much good. If you are feeding turkeys and other birds you should be supplying Milo or grain sorghum along with corn, or better yet, feeding

*“The first half of life consists of the capacity to enjoy without the chance; the last half consists of the chance without the capacity”.*

Mark Twain

*“Man endures pain as an undeserved punishment: woman accepts it as a natural heritage.”*

Anonymous

*“People seldom improve when they have no other model than themselves to copy after.”*

Oliver Goldsmith

### **Did you know...**

...some people think deer baiting is supplemental feeding.

...deer baiting is putting out corn just before and during the deer season.

...baiting is of little value to deer, and people usually stop it about the time it might be useful.

...supplemental feeding should be done during stress periods when the protein content of forage is low.

...supplemental feeding is very expensive, and good range management is less expensive and more effective.

chicken scratch. Keep your song bird feeders and bird baths filled (black oil sunflower seeds attract the most birds), and if you can, water your yard and irrigate fields to maintain as many plants and flowers as you can for birds, butterflies and insects.

Water sources should be plentiful, and alternate sources established where tanks have dried up. Keeping a faucet or windmill dripping in a shallow pan or depression can go a long way when no other source is available. Trap and/or kill all the feral hogs and coyotes you can. If you have any natural cover left, protect it.

Gary Homerstad, Technical Guidance Biologist, TPWD in Victoria, also points out that drought is a good reason landowners should keep their deer *and* livestock numbers at or below relative “carrying capacity” (editor’s note, remember the BCWMA 2004 and 2005 “harvest recommendations”, especially regarding doe removal? If you removed your quota you should be in better shape than those who did not). Gary goes on to say: “Chances are, that even if nutrition levels hold up, lack of fawning/nesting cover will spell disaster for any significant reproduction. Even CRP lands will have been grazed to the ground. That is why it is also important to lay aside certain areas such as riparian zones and/or pasture corners from grazing.”

For those that missed the boat on good management practices this time around, perhaps we can do better next time. In South Texas, there is another drought just around the corner.

### **NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC TV TO SPOTLIGHT BCWMA**

BCWMA and the University of Texas will receive world wide exposure in May. The Explorer Channel will be running a one hour program on imported fire ants, Phorid flies and UT’s fly introduction program. The program was filmed in Austin and Beeville over several months of 2005 and early 2006. Exact dates are not known at this time, so keep checking your TV schedules. BCWMA fire ant program participants will also have the program on DVD.

### **BCWMA AND THE FIRE ANT CONTROL PROGRAM**

We have flies and we are almost ready to share them. Imported Phorid flies are actively attacking imported fire ants at the Hwy 202 release site and other landowners can bring ants to be infected as soon as they are trained on the process. This program requires a significant commitment in terms of time and labor. You also need a site that has a timed irrigation or sprinkler system running year around.

These “Refuge Sites” can be a yard around the house, a golf course, or any place that is consistently watered even in a drought. BCWMA has the only successful release site in South Texas, most likely due to sprinkler systems. Having trees and shade may also be a factor. In normal times the flies will spread outward from the refuge site at rates up to and even in excess of 3 miles per year, and we expect them to locate additional refuges sites on their own. When droughts hit again the flies should be able to survive at these sites and then expand outward again when rain returns.

BCWMA will conduct fly introduction training sessions if there is enough interest from area landowners. The class will probably take the better part of a day, and will be hands on in the field, demonstrating the actual process. Between what the Association owns, and what Board members have purchased, we have the necessary equipment and will loan it to participants on a first come basis. There will probably be a refundable deposit required on some of the items.

TOWMA, the Texas Organization of Wildlife Management Associations, is currently determining their member’s interest in this project. If sufficient, they intend to adopt the program state wide and will provide training and other resources to assist in its implementation. Dr. Gilbert, the University of Texas professor behind the project, spoke to the fall 2005 TOWMA meeting, and BCWMA Director Larry Jones did a second presentation at the spring 2006 TOWMA meeting. TOWMA expects to have a decision by the end of April.

If you are interested in introducing phorid flies at your ranch, and have a refuge

...reducing cattle and deer numbers is the most effective way of maintaining high quality natural forage.

...in good conditions deer eat very little grass and do not compete with cattle for food.

...in poor conditions cattle and deer compete more directly since both will consume forbs and browse plants.

...deer require 6 to 7 percent crude protein for their rumen to function.

...deer require a daily diet of 12 to 16 percent protein for normal growth.

...corn has 6 to 10 percent protein and is high in carbohydrates and is not adequate for development.

...corn can provide energy during very cold weather but should not be used as a supplement.

...food plots are considered one type of supplemental feeding.

...food plots may be of questionable value in drought prone South Texas.

...food plots are a lot like bank loans in that the only time you can get one (to grow) is

site, and can commit to two days a week for three weeks in a row, contact Larry Jones at 361-362-0430 to get your name on the list for the training session. If you are interested, but want more detail before you decide, let Larry know that also. If enough interest is generated we will hold a meeting to explain the entire process in detail before you commit.

## **FIRE ANTS AND PHORID FLIES - AN OVERVIEW**

### **Damage**

According to Texas A & M, imported fire ants (*Invicta*) currently cost Texas about 1.2 billion dollars a year. Around 700 million of that cost is to homeowners.

Imported fire ants damage equipment, start fires by shorting out electrical systems, interfere with human activity, and have a negative impact on wildlife. For example, fire ants hurt quail populations, not only through direct impact on chicks and nests, but also because they directly compete with quail, especially chicks, for the small insects they depend on for food. Does hide their fawns in open grass fields shortly after birth, and fire ant attacks frequently cause the fawns to move, which increases predator mortality.

### **Native Ants**

Texas has several species of native fire ants, all of which are controlled by native phorid flies. Native ants are not considered a nuisance because they are controlled by native phorid flies and competition from other kinds of ants. Unfortunately, those native populations are being wiped out or reduced in many areas by imported ants. They have been completely wiped out in some areas.

### **Control**

Phorid flies do not directly control imported fire ants. They only infect and kill from 1 to 3% of the ants. Their value, however, comes from modifying the behavior of the ants. When the flies are present they terrorize the ants, causing them to retreat into their dens thus limiting their food foraging. Continued pressure causes the colonies to decline and limits their spread due to their decreased ability to compete with other types of ants for food and den sites.

The goal of imported fire ant control is to achieve a balance of imported and native ants so that one species cannot dominate and become a pest.

To control imported fire ant populations you need to protect all types of native ants. Native ants compete with imported fire ants for food and space. During periods when phorid flies force imported ants into their mounds native ants have a better chance to compete. Reducing the number of competing native ants greatly increases the opportunity for imported ants to expand.

### **Fly Information**

South American fire ants are not considered a problem in South America, but they are a major problem here because they lack biological controls. Unfortunately, Texas Phorid flies are racists and don't attack imported ants.

Not all Brazilian phorid flies are host specific, and some will attack our native fire ants and are not imported. The UT lab has to quarantine and conduct extensive research as well as apply for USDA approval before any new imported flies can be released.

### **Single vs. Multi-Queen Colonies**

In Brazil, fire ants exist as single-queen colonies, with up to five different species of phorid flies attacking them. These single queen colonies spread when a winged virgin queen leaves the colony, mates high in the air, and then lands to start a new colony. These widely spaced new colonies are mixed in with and compete with many other ant species.

Imported fire ants have been mutating into multi-queen colonies in Texas since at least the 1970's, and they are the most common form in Texas today. These ants release large numbers of queens and can blanket an area with new colonies so they

when you don't need it.

...determining the carrying capacity of your habitat and limiting the number of cattle and deer to or below that level is the biggest part of what good range management is all about.

...the selective harvest of excess deer each year is a vital part of effective range management.

...burning, brush control, disking and all the other enhancement practices will help, but it has to start with not exceeding carrying capacity to be most effective.

...in South Texas, range management is best practiced by basing your practices on making it through the bad times rather than praying that the good times will last forever.

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spread much more rapidly than single queen colonies.

In addition, the multi-queen colonies are not as aggressive in defending their territories as single queen colonies. Single-queen colonies kill intruding ants and colony density is much less. Multi-queen colonies of over 1000 colonies per acre are not uncommon.

### US-South America Comparisons

Comparisons between Brazilian and US roadsides show Brazilian fire ant density represents about 10% of the density in the US. On the other hand, it is possible to find ant densities in Brazil similar to those in the US. The difference in Brazil is that when a mound is disturbed and the ants rush out, they are forced to return to their mounds to escape the phorid flies. You can have a picnic next to a mound in Brazil because of the presence of flies.

### Fly Specifics

Some phorids are more disruptive of ant behavior than others. Some fly species attack disturbed mounds while others attack foraging ants. A variety of ant species will ideally be introduced, exhibiting a wide range of attack behaviors.

The age structure of flies is critical to their introduction and survival. Flies, in the "fly" life stage, have a brief life span of only a few days, so they must be available in all forms of development at any given time to maintain a population.

We currently have two fly species to work with; hopefully others will be available in the future. One of the current flies is from Brazil (*Tricuspus*) and is the larger of the two which makes it easier to see when monitoring mounds. On the other hand it also is size specific in its ant infection process, so more size sorting is needed.

The second, smaller fly (*Curvatus*) is from Northern Argentina, and ant size is not as critical, it seems to adapt a little better to the South Texas climate, and is the one we have been able to successfully introduce in Bee County.

### Fly Introduction Methods

The original method of introducing phorids was to raise them in the UT lab and then take them to ants in the field. That is still done, but limited fly production, money and manpower limit its effectiveness.

The USDA has a mass rearing facility in Gainesville, Florida and they supply flies to cooperators like A & M who take the flies to the ants in the field like UT does. Unfortunately, A & M has not seen fit to have a rearing facility.

What we are doing is different; we collect ants and take them to flies that are already established in the field. Those flies infect the ants and then we return them to their original mound. We do this weekly over a 3 to 6 week period (depending on which fly we are working with) to improve the chances of it working.

With this method we:

- Are not limited by "raised fly" availability
- We can cover more areas
- We can infect those areas important to us
- We are not dependent on government agencies or their funding

The UT-BCWMA phorid fly introduction program started in early 2005, and it is now up and running. If you want to be a part of it let us know.

### ANOTHER REASON TO BURN

Research has determined that burning plant material produces volatile compounds that are water soluble and these compounds stimulate the germination of many seeds with different dormancy strategies. The active chemicals are produced around 320 to 390 degrees F. Once dissolved in water the active compounds also stimulate rooting, seedling growth, and flowering. The positive effects of smoke have resulted in it being used as a seed pre-treatment for enhancing conservation of threatened or rare plant species, the exploitation of desirable plants, and in the reclamation of mine spoils and disturbed land. Scientists think many seeds evolved to respond to fire,

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which might signal the availability of more space and light to grow.

Recent research has determined that butenolide, a compound of smoke, when used to treat seeds from lettuce, tobacco, and 14 wild plants, dramatically increased the number of seeds that sprouted. So, happiness is truly smoke on the horizon - in more ways than we originally imagined.

*Reprinted, with permission, from the Edwards Plateau Prescribed Burning Association newsletter, Charles "Butch" Taylor, Editor.*

### COYOTE AND WILD HOG CONTESTS CONTINUE IN 2006

Don't forget to enter the BCWMA Wild Hog and Coyote Contests. All you have to do is cut the last 6 inches off the tail of either animal and put in your freezer in a Zip-Loc bag. That may be easier if you kill it first. Then bring it to any BCWMA meeting and swap your predator tails for "drawing tickets". The drawings will be held and prizes awarded at our 2007 annual meeting. There are separate contests for hogs and coyotes and first and second place prizes for each. Thanks to sponsors Bee Ag in Beeville and Bee County Co-op in Tynan for donating the corn and Milo for last years prizes.

### GATE SIGNS

Members are entitled to one free sign with their initial membership. Signs are available at the County Extension office, and at all regular meetings. Please make sure you have your sign and that it is posted on your gate or fence. Additional signs are available if needed.

### CEU CREDITS BEING AWARDED FOR MANY MEETINGS

You can obtain continuing education credits to maintain your Pesticide Applicators License by attending certain BCWMA meetings. Forms are available at meetings that qualify for the credit (most of them).

### MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION

Property ownership is not required. Anyone interested in improving the quantity and quality of wildlife in Bee County is WELCOME. Annual dues are \$20 and Life Memberships are \$100. Sponsorships include a one year membership and are \$250 per year.

### BCWMA MEETING SCHEDULE

- **May 19 2006 - Friday - 7:00pm to 8:30pm - Range & Wildlife Management Under Drought Conditions**
- **September, 16, 2006 - Saturday - 9:00am - 12:00 Noon - Quail Field Day and demonstration in Bee County**
- **October, 2006 - Annual Whitetail Deer Workshop.** Spotlight survey results, harvest recommendations, aging on the hoof.

### NEWSLETTER SCHEDULE

**January**, mailed on or before January 15 to precede early February Annual Meetings

**March**, mailed on or before March 15 to precede early April meetings

**August**, mailed on or before August 15 to precede September meetings

**October**, (mailed on or before October 15 to precede late October meetings)

Other notices will be sent if circumstances warrant.

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\* Buddy Turner -  
OGT Program  
Director \*

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**BCWMA Officers**

President: Pat True: 361-548-5059

Vice President, Tom Keller, 361-375-2924

Secretary-Treasurer, Bill Frank, 361-877-4831

**BCWMA Directors**

Joe Doreck, 361-456-1125

Bill Frank, 361-749-7763

Larry Jones, 361-362-0430

Tom Keller, 361-375-2924

Ken Langford, 361-643-8878

Ellis McKinney, 361-358-3137

Alvin Rubottom, 361-375-2108

Pat True, 361-548-5059

Randy Walls, 361-287-3376

D. Montemayor, (ex-officio, non voting) 361-362-3280

**Fire Ant Program Participants**

Joe Doreck

Larry & Sandy Jones

Tom & Mary Keller

Alvin Rubottom

Pat True

**Newsletter**

Larry Jones, 361-362-0430, [ljones@hrbizmall.com](mailto:ljones@hrbizmall.com)

**BCWMA Member Application**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Cell #: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Fax: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_  
City/State/Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Member's Cooperative Agreement

I own / manage (circle one) land on county/state road \_\_\_\_\_ containing \_\_\_\_\_ acres

(Note: This information is confidential. It is simply used to determine total acreage enrolled in the co-op)

I agree to cooperate with the goals and bylaws of the Bee County Wildlife Management Association.

This agreement does not give any unauthorized person the right to trespass on the above property.

I am in no way obligated to the Texas Parks & Wildlife Department of BCWMA. I may or may not agree with the management practices recommended. The only thing I have agreed to is that I recognize the need for wildlife management in order to improve the wildlife on my property.

This agreement is valid as long as I am a dues paying member of the BCWMA.

Enclosed is (circle one) \$20 Member \$100 Life Member \$250 Sponsor

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Make checks payable to BCWMA and mail to P. O. Box 1967, Beeville, TX 78104 Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**BCWMA**  
**Bee County Wildlife Management Association**  
**P. O. Box 447**  
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