

Bee County Wildlife Management Association



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

October 2006 Newsletter

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Good for a grin...

Computer got you baffled?
Check out these excerpts
from an article in the Wall
Street Journal by Jim
Carlton:

Compaq is considering
changing the command
"Press Any Key" to "Press
Return Key" because of the
many calls asking where
the "Any" key is.

FROM THE PRESIDENTS PICKUP TRUCK AND LOCAL CAFÉ

From the August TOWMA (Texas Organization of Wildlife Management Associations) meeting at College Station we learned that the feral hogs now wander through 254 counties of Texas. One might think the dove population had a healthy hatch when, in fact, this is not true. The overall dove population is down approximately 18% from 2005. Larry Jones presented a well planned presentation on fire ants, and I vowed to never spend another night in the College Station Hilton hotel. The rooms smelled and the AC did not work well which made for some long nights.

Now that we are into the 06/07 hunting season, I hope all of you took time to clean and inspect your respective weapons for the sport you chose to pursue. Often times we fail to check for foreign objects in our barrels and actions, to check for loose screws on scope mounts, to replace hard recoil pads, and last, but not least, to go out and practice. One of the most critical errors we commit is to not follow through with each shot, and then of course we wonder why we missed our target. Remember my "BRAFF" rule, Breathe, Relax, Aim, Fire, Follow through. Practice this enough and it will become second nature.

Have a great season, and I'll see you at our October deer meeting.
Pat True

SEPTEMBER FIELD DAY REPORT

Our September meeting, "It's All About Habitat" was a Field Day held at the Welder Wildlife Refuge near Sinton, Texas on September 16th. Dr. Lynn Drawe, manager of the refuge, was our speaker.

The information below comes from my personal field notes, any errors herein are mine; Dr. Drawe definitely knows what he is doing, while I admit I sometimes don't!

Over a period of one year deer will average eating 10% grasses, 15% browse (woody plants), and 75% forbs (weeds). These consumption percentages vary by the time of year, i.e., in the spring deer eat a higher percentage of new tender native grasses. Possibly 75% of all their grass consumption occurs in the spring.

AST technical support had a caller complaining that her mouse was hard to control with the dust cover on. The cover turned out to be the plastic bag the mouse was packaged in.

Another Compaq technician received a call from a man complaining that the system wouldn't read word processing files from his old diskettes. After trouble-shooting for magnets and heat failed to diagnose the problem, it was found that the customer labeled the diskettes by rolling them into a typewriter to type on them.

Another AST customer was asked to send a copy of her defective diskettes. A few days later a letter arrived from the customer along with Xeroxed copies of the floppies.

A Dell technician advised his customer to put his troubled floppy back in the drive and close the door. The customer asked the tech to hold on, and was then heard putting the phone down, getting up and crossing the room to close the door to his room.

Another Dell customer called to say he couldn't get his computer to fax anything. After 40 minutes of trouble-shooting, the technician discovered the man was trying to fax a piece of paper by holding it in front of the monitor screen and hitting the "send" key.

An exasperated caller to Dell Computer Tech

Deer switch to forbs as soon as they are available, but deer are often stressed from winter conditions and there may not be enough forbs to meet their nutritional needs. When forbs dry up deer switch to browse. Deer consume the food source that is most available at any given time.

Fruits are high in sugar which provides energy but less protein.

Deer have a rumen perhaps 1 ½ gallon in size, while a cows may be 15 to 20 gallons. Food moves through a deer much faster than a cow and consequently they get less nutrition from it that a cow does. As a result deer need food that is more nutritious (higher protein) than cows. They nibble and pick at their food sources rather than consume large volumes like a cow.

Every deer rumen he has examined over his career has had at least some prickly pear in it.

One Welder Refuge study identified 178 different species of forbs in just one plot during the spring and summer period.

Granjeno is over 50% digestible and very valuable for deer.

Brasil has a dark purple berry that is the sweetest berry on any plant in South Texas and the berry is edible by humans.

In a refuge study looking at the value of land treatments in terms of which best produced woody food plants most preferred by deer, scalping (clear dozing) was ranked highest and roller chopping was second. Root plowing and raking was the worst because it killed the most brush. Dozing and chopping, on the other hand, stimulated the growth of fresh and tender new browse, but the process has to be repeated every few years.

Burning is probably the most cost effective and best method of managing brush. Brush cannot be effectively eradicated, or controlled, it can only be managed with ongoing treatments.

A study of radio collared fawn established the following facts about predation:

Coyotes killed 50% of the fawns and bobcats killed 3%. Other deaths were documented but causes could not determined with certainty, but they probably included doe abandonment (doe rejected or could not find her fawn) and injuries from coyote attacks that did not kill immediately.

On average at the refuge, (and probably on your ranch) in a normal year, 100 does will have 160 fawns in their womb; only 140 will be born; during the first six weeks of life predators will get about 100 of those, so only 35 to 40 will survive. If it was not for this high predation rate the habitat would be overrun and destroyed by deer. This natural balance is what keeps the deer population in check. If you initiate a predator control program, you should also start an aggressive deer killing program in order to keep total deer numbers under control.

In one refuge study with two high fenced 1000 acre pastures (in one pasture coyotes were left alone, and in the other pasture all coyotes were exterminated) the deer population in the pasture without coyotes exploded and resulted in starvation, high deer mortality, and extremely high parasite loads in the deer.

Support couldn't get her new Dell Computer to turn on. After ensuring that the computer was plugged in, the technician asked her what happened when she pushed the power button. Her response, "I pushed and pushed on this foot pedal and nothing happens." The "foot pedal" turned out to be the computer's mouse.

Another customer called Compaq tech support to say her brand-new computer wouldn't work. She said she unpacked the unit, plugged it in, and sat there for 20 minutes waiting for something to happen. When asked what happened when she pressed the power switch, she asked "What power switch?"

Did you know...

...there are about 20 million hunters in the US?

...the average hunter spends over \$1,600 per year on the sport?

...hunters contribute over \$21 billion a year to our economy?

...hunters provide jobs for nearly a million people in the US?

...gun and ammunition sales generated over 224 million dollars in Federal excise taxes 2005?

...those dollars were used to fund wildlife and habitat conservation projects?

Deer had very low fertility, as well as an average weight loss of 12 pounds per deer. Fawn births and survival decreased dramatically. As many 12 different parasites were found in deer involved in the study. The lesson from this study is that one way or another nature will control deer numbers, and her methods cause much more suffering than instantaneous death from a bullet.

On the refuge they have about 1 deer per 10 acres. They have an extensive rotational grazing program and aggressive brush management program, so they have a lot of deer food available. However, Lynn says that if they were going to manage for big bucks (which they don't) they would cut the deer per acre numbers in half, or down to 1 deer to 20 acres, in order to provide more nutrition. Keep in mind this is on a property where the habitat is in better condition and probably better managed than 90% of South Texas ranches.

Lynn sums it up by saying that you have to "get rid of a doe to make room for a buck" if you want to grow bigger bucks and improve buck doe ratios.

This was a great morning and I think most of us learned a lot.

OCTOBER MEETING

October 27, 2006 - Friday - 7:00pm - 9:00pm - **Annual Whitetail Deer Workshop.** Our area TPWD Biologist Brad Porter will conduct the meeting. He will discuss the 2006 spotlight survey results, make harvest recommendations for the County, and present a program about aging deer on the hoof. Bee County Exposition Center

WHY I HUNT

The following is by independent biologist Macy Ledbetter and is reprinted with permission.

I hunt because my father hunted, and he took me with him, and so we built a bond that I still cherish. And because his father hunted, and his father's father, and all of the fathers in my line and yours, as far back as those fathers who invented spears and axes and recorded their adventures with pictures on the walls of caves.

I hunt because I am convinced, as many anthropologists argue, that prehistoric man was a hunter before he was a farmer, and because the genetic drive remains too powerful for me to resist. I do not need to hunt to eat, but I need to hunt to be fully who I am.

I hunt because if I didn't, I would have seen fewer eagles and ospreys, 'coons and skunks, foxes and bobcats, antelope and deer, and although I don't happen to hunt all these creatures, I do love to enter into their world and spy on them.

I hunt for the whistle of a teal's wings and the sudden explosion of a bobwhite's flush, for the tinkle of a dog's bell and for the sudden silence when he locks on point, for my partner's cry of "Bird" when he kicks up a covey. I hunt for the call of a distant coyote, for the high predatory scream of a Red-tailed Hawk, for the hissing of the breeze in the mesquites, for the snoring of my companion in the one-room cabin, and for the soothing patter of an autumn rainstorm on the tin roof.

You May Not Know...

...there are 30 different sub species of white tailed deer in North, Central and South America.

...a deer's eyes are large and set on the sides of their head to give them a 310 degree field of vision.

...deer have a reflective layer of cells in the back of their eyes that collect light so they see better at night - it also causes the eye shine seen in deer at night.

...deer have pilo erector muscles in the skin that raise the hair coat, much like humans get "goose bumps". This increases air space for insulation.

...deer deposit fat first in bone marrow, kidneys, and pelvic areas. It is deposited last in the ribs, brisket and tail head. Deer lose fat in reverse order.

...deer have seven glands: forehead, in front of the eyes, between the two larger hoofs, inside of the rear legs in the knee area, within the nostrils and upper palate of the mouth, and in the brain.

...deer have a four chambered stomach.

...deer have no gal bladder, the liver produces bile that digests fats and detoxifies toxins.

...deer are seasonally polyestrous, they only cycle during certain times of the year and come into heat on 28 day cycles.

...a deer's gestation period

I hunt because it is never boring or disappointing to be outdoors with a purpose, even when no game is spotted, and because taking a walk in the brush without a purpose makes everything that happens feel random and accidental and unearned.

I hunt for the satisfying exhaustion after a long day in the brush, for the new stories that every day of hunting gives us, and for the soft snoring and dream-whimpering and twitching of sleeping dogs in the bed of the truck as we drive home through the darkness.

I hunt because it reminds me that in nature there is a food chain where everything eats and is, in its turn, eaten, where birth, survival, and reproduction give full meaning to life, where death is ever present, and where the only uncertainty is the time and manner of that death. Hunting reminds me that I am integrated into that cycle, not separate from or above it.

I hunt because it keeps my passions alive and my memories fresh and my senses alert even as my hair grows gray, and because I am afraid that if I stopped hunting, I would instantly become an old man, and because I believe that as long as I hunt I will remain alive.

You can visit Macy Ledbetter's web site and contact him at <http://www.SpringCreekOutdoors.com> Our thanks to Macy for his on going help and his support of BCWMA and for letting us use many of the items he has written over the years.

COASTAL BEND PRESCRIBED BURN ASSOCIATION UPDATE

The CBPBA is a non profit organization comprised of landowners, managers and other people interested in improving habitat for wildlife, managing brush, and improving cattle grazing pastures. It currently includes 12 Counties in the Coastal Bend. They are: Aransas, Bee, Calhoun, DeWitt, Goliad, Jackson, Karnes, Live Oak, Nueces, Refugio, San Patricio, and Victoria.

Annual dues are \$30, and by joining now you will be paid up through December of 2007. There is a membership application included with this newsletter. CBPBA will have a newsletter in the near future that will provide information on the Association, scheduled burn schools, burn field days, and other items of interest relating to prescribed burning.

The National Wild Turkey Federation has provided CBPBA with a large grant that has been used to purchase a burn trailer and much of the equipment required to conduct a prescribed burn. Items included are fire pump and tank, radios, drip torches, flappers and so on. The trailer can be checked out and used by members for a rate of \$50 per 24 hour period or \$75 for 36 hours. It will be based in Victoria at The Nature Conservancy Facility. As CBPBA membership grows we plan to add additional burn trailers that will be stationed in other areas of the 12 counties.

Another advantage of CBPBA membership is the availability of personnel to help members when they burn. In return for helping with at least two other member burns, members will assist you in a burn on your ranch.

Summer is often the most productive time to burn, but during our dry summers

is 199 to 201 days.
...male deer are only fertile when they have hardened antlers, and are infertile the rest of the year.

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we usually have burn bans. Burn associations, because their intensive training and heavy focus on safety, have been successful in getting permission to conduct prescribed burns during burn bans. By educating county officials and demonstrating a history of successful burns, burn associations have been able to get permission when individuals could not.

Due to the many wild fires this year and in the last few years there is a high public awareness of the danger of wild fire. Wild fires occur where there is a heavy fuel load on the ground. Prescribed burning removes this fuel load in a safe and controlled manner, which helps prevent wild fires. One slogan currently circulating is "If you don't support prescribed burns you support wildfires!"

CBPBA sponsored a burn workshop and demo burn on a 600 acre pasture of the Lucky J Ranch near Victoria August 15 and 16. There was a large turnout for this event and a successful burn was conducted. Photos are posted on the BCWMA web site in the Photo Gallery section if you would like to see what a major burn in heavy brush looks like. Go to <http://www.bee-county-wildlife.org> Pretty awesome!

UPCOMING SEASON REPORT: HUNTING SEASON IS GOING TO BE GOOD ENOUGH, BY MACY LEDBETTER

The good news is that hunting season is here. The bad news is that the record-setting year we experienced last year will only be a memory. The on-going drought and harsh conditions severely impacted all wildlife species across the board and hunters will recognize that fact while in the field this year.

Deer suffered through the heat at exactly the wrong time for them. They were busy having babies and growing antlers and the results of that stress is obvious this year. I have spent considerable time conducting deer surveys in several different counties this month and the results are all the same. Fawn survival, body weights, and antler production are all down this year. Don't get me wrong, there are still some great bucks out there; however, they are much fewer and farther between this year.

Ranches that practice diligent habitat management, supplemental feeding and population control, will enjoy better results than those that do not. Last year, for example, I observed fawn survival rates from 80 to 140%, fawns were literally everywhere and behind every bush. This year, however, fawn survival rates are ranging from 10-50%. Again, those properties doing all the right things are on the high end of the spectrum and those that don't are on the other end.

Deer hunters/managers live and die by fawn survival rates. Without fawns being produced, trophy bucks will not be found five and six years down the road. It is difficult and frustrating hunting a deer that does not even exist, if you understand my jist here. Fawn survival is paramount for trophy production and grass production is paramount for fawn survival.

Antler production, across the board, is down on the average. There are far fewer extra non-typical points (kickers, drop tines, etc) compared to the past

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few years. By this time last year, I had observed dozens of different bucks with drop tines during my surveys. So far this year, I have yet to find a handful of bucks with a drop tine. Rainfall, and the timing thereof, make all the difference in the world on antler production. Providing deer with supplemental feed surely helps to minimize the impact, but nothing compares to good ole rain. Body weights are also down this year, especially those females that did manage to raise a fawn. Feeders and farmed food plots should prove very popular this year for hunters as food is currently in short supply and long in demand.

Don't let all this information depress you, it isn't an emergency or reason to call in FEMA, but it surely is a different scenario than what we have had to deal with in the past three or four years. There are still plenty of deer out there, and some good bucks yet to be had, but just don't expect a repeat of last year. Grab a kid, a wife, a neighbor, or even a stranger this fall and take them hunting with you. There is no better excuse to spend quality time with your friends than while in the field observing and learning about wild things.

Macy Ledbetter, www.SpringCreekOutdoors.com

BCWMA WEBSITE USE INCREASING

Traffic is building as more and more people visit our new website, <http://www.bee-county-wildlife.org>. Several people have told me they use the site as their home page because it provides easy access to current and forecast weather.

If you miss a newsletter, all copies are archived on the site. The Photo Gallery is the most visited section of the site and has 174 photographs in it as this is written. We need more and encourage you to post photos of your ranch, family, outings and anything else you think would be of interest to out members. You do not have to identify yourself although you can if you want to. The uploading process is simple, go to <http://www.bee-county-wildlife.org/photos/index.php> and give it a try. Don't worry about taking perfect photographs, just get as much local color in there as you can. Send questions and suggestions to webmaster Larry Jones at ljones@bee-county-wildlife.com.

INPUT NEEDED ON HUNTING LEASE LICENSE PROGRAM

Anyone who leases land for hunting in Texas is required by law to have a state lease license.

To encourage landowners to join wildlife management associations, TP&W has a program under which landowners who lease land for hunting can save money by buying their lease license under the master license of a management association. That means that BCWMA members can pay \$10 per year for their Lease License instead of the normal fee of \$75 to \$240, depending on acreage.

2005 was the first year we participated in this program and we had a number of members participate. This year only three signed up and we do not know why.

Your Board would like your input regarding this program. We announced it in the Bee Picayune, in the Newsletter, in a direct mailing, and on the web site, so

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we assume people knew about it but did not want to participate. We would like input as to why. If there is no interest we will not continue the program next year.

COYOTE AND WILD HOG CONTESTS

Don't forget to enter the BCWMA Wild Hog and Coyote Contests. Cut the last 6 inches off the tail of either animal and put in your freezer in a Zip-Loc bag. That is easier if you kill it first. Then bring it to any BCWMA meeting and swap your predator tails for "drawing tickets". Drawings are held and prizes awarded at our annual meetings.

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.

MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION

Property ownership is not required. Anyone interested in improving the quantity and quality of wildlife in Bee County is WELCOME.

Visit http://www.bee-county-wildlife.org/information.php?info_id=10 for details.

BCWMA MEETING SCHEDULE

- **October 27, 2006** - Friday - 7:00pm - 9:00pm - **Annual Whitetail Deer Workshop** to be conducted by TPWD area Biologist Brad Porter. Spotlight survey results, harvest recommendations, and a presentation on aging on the hoof. Bee County Exposition Center
- **February 10, 2007** - Friday - Annual Meeting, Banquette and Election. Live and silent auctions. Guest Speaker to be announced. Coastal Bend College

OTHER EVENTS OF INTEREST

- October 24, 2006 - Tuesday - 3:00pm - 7:30pm - QDMA Quality Deer Management Short Course, Kingsville. \$35 includes dinner, children free with a paid adult. Call 800-209-3337 for more information
- October 25 - 26, 2006 - South Texas Farm & Ranch Show, Victoria, Texas. Call 361-575-4581 or go to <http://www.geocities.com/stfrsvictoria/> for more information.

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