

THE CONSERVATION QUARTERLY

Summer 2014 edition

Nature notes & news from the Lavaca County Wildlife Management Association

Fall Membership Meeting

All members are encouraged to attend the general membership meeting of the Lavaca County Wildlife Management Association on Sunday, September 21, 2014. Doors will open at 10:00 a.m. and the general meeting will get underway around 11:00 with a presentation by a guest speaker Donnie Frels, manager of Texas Parks and Wildlife Department's Kerr Wildlife Management Area (WMA) near Hunt, Texas. The Kerr WMA is often considered TPWD's premier wildlife research facility, and Donnie will share some of that research with us with a presentation entitled "Who breeds who?," an eye-opening look into which age-class of white-tailed bucks actually do most of the breeding. This presentation alone will shatter most members' preconceived notions about how readily good genetics are passed on. Donnie will also give an update on research investigating the use of toxicants for feral hog control. Many of you have read about this work in various media outlets, but here is your chance to get a first-hand look at the work being done, and to learn more about if, and when, this technology may become available for public use.

After Donnie's presentations a catered meal will be served. Members are asked to bring their favorite dessert to share with everyone. After lunch, Doug Jobes, Texas Parks and Wildlife biologist for Lavaca County, will review the herd composition data, and discuss harvest recommendations for the upcoming season. After Doug, Joel Wagner, LCWMA chairman, will give an update on the LCWMA and its future direction. Raffle drawings will follow and the meeting will adjourn.

In addition to the bucket raffles held at the meeting, a special raffle is being conducted to offset the cost of the meeting. Only 1000 tickets will be sold. Tickets can be purchased at the meeting, however, if you are unable to attend and wish to purchase tickets, please complete the form on page 4. Send the completed form along with your payment to the LCWMA and tickets will be made out for you. In addition, you will receive a numbered ticket stub verifying your entry. The drawing will occur at the meeting on September 21, 2014.

The Board of Directors has put together an impressive suite of prizes for the bucket raffles. There will be something for everyone hunters, wildlife enthusiasts, and fishermen alike.

So, make plans now to join your fellow LCWMA members on Sunday, September 21, 2014 at the Knights of Columbus Hall (321 US HWY 77 S) in Hallettsville for the Fall 2014 membership meeting of the LCWMA. We hope to see all of you there.

Please help us reduce waste!

- If you are receiving both a printed and an email copy of this newsletter please send us a message and let us know to stop sending you both forms. If you are currently receiving the hardcopy form of the newsletter, and would like to receive the newsletter via email, please send a note to lavacacountywma@gmail.com, and we will convert you over to email only.
- Corresponding via email allows the LCWMA to get information to the members faster and saves funds that could be used to further our conservation goals.

Gate sign exchange program

Current LCWMA members who trade in an old-style WMA gate sign will receive \$3 off the purchase of a new-style LCWMA gate sign. Signs will be available for purchase at the fall membership meeting. Signs may also be purchased at the Texas Parks and Wildlife office (361-798-2625) at 412 N. Texana in Hallettsville.

Lavaca County White-tailed deer Spotlight Surveys begin in August

by Doug Jobes, Texas Parks & Wildlife biologist for Lavaca County

The following information will hopefully address some questions that members may have in regards to population surveys and density estimates within the management units of Lavaca County. Other than herd composition counts which every member wishing to receive antlerless permits are required to do, we also conduct spotlight surveys on predetermined routes throughout the county. A deer spotlight survey is a method of sampling a given area of land and the density of deer found there. Area is expressed as the number of visible acres which is determined by taking a series of visibility readings along the designated route at 10th mile intervals. Data collected on a deer spotlight survey is expressed as the number of acres per deer. Multiple counts are required on the repeatable route for reliable information on deer density.

Estimates of deer density and habitat surveys can help determine whether your deer herd is at, above or below the carrying capacity of the habitat. Carrying capacity is the density of healthy and productive deer the land can support without causing habitat damage. Knowledge of the deer density and herd composition is necessary to regulate annual deer harvest (how many bucks or does to harvest). Herd composition counts are used in conjunction with spotlight census data to more accurately estimate percentages of bucks, does, and fawns in the deer herd.

Spotlight surveys conducted during August and September are less likely to be influenced by seasonal environmental factors, food distribution, acorn-drop, or other biological events affecting deer. Deer are well distributed in their home ranges during this period of the year and are more easily identified by sex and age-class (fawns). Each route will be counted at least 3 times to improve reliability of the data. Also surveys are not conducted during rain, high wind or following significant disturbance along the route during the day of the count. All counts begin one hour after official sunset and local law enforcement will be contacted prior to conducting spotlight surveys.

Volunteers needed to monitor water quality

Interested in water quality? Want to know more information about the water bodies in your area? The Texas Water Resources Institute (TWRI) in partnership with the Texas Stream Team is interested in starting a group of trained citizen scientists and water quality monitors in the Lavaca River basin. The Lavaca River is listed as impaired for bacteria on the Texas Integrated Report of Impaired Waters. The Texas Stream Team, a program of The Meadows Center for Water and the Environment at Texas State University in San Marcos, works with partners like TWRI to train citizens as certified water quality monitors. Trained monitors collect data from locations that are not necessarily monitored by other agencies, to determine the status of the water quality in that area. TWRI and the Texas Stream Team will work to train interested volunteers and provide equipment and guidance for such monitoring.

If you are interested in becoming a volunteer and would like more information please contact Matt Brown, Program Coordinator for TWRI, at matthew.brown@ag.tamu.edu.

Membership dues

If you haven't already done so, please send in your annual membership dues for 2014. Dues are \$20, and checks and money orders should be made payable to LCWMA. Please mail your dues to the LCWMA at the return address on this newsletter. Questions pertaining to membership dues status should be directed to LCWMA Treasurer, Sam Bordovsky at 361-798-1813 or sbordovsky@gmail.com.

The doe permit process

Every year about this time I get a ton of phone calls, from new and old members alike, about the process for receiving doe permits. So, in an effort to avoid this onslaught I will go through the permit process beginning with paying your membership dues. As stated previously, any LCWMA member looking to receive antlerless (doe) permits for the 2014-2015 hunting season must have their membership dues paid up by August 15, 2014. Interested members must also submit their herd composition report to Texas Parks and Wildlife by the date printed on the herd composition sheet (i.e., September 2, 2014). Failure to submit herd composition by the due date will render a member ineligible to receive permits for the 2014-2015 hunting season.

Once Texas Parks and Wildlife receives the herd composition surveys they are sorted by management unit (MU) then combined with spotlight survey data from each respective MU to create a harvest recommendation for each. This harvest recommendation is then loaded into the Texas Wildlife Information Management Services (TWIMS) site, into accounts that have been established for each individual landowner/land agent. If you have an email address on file with Texas Parks and Wildlife you will receive an email from TWIMS when your permits have been loaded into the system. You must then log into your personal TWIMS account using your *whole email address* as the login name as well as the password you created when you first accessed TWIMS. If at any time you forget your TWIMS password simply click on the "Forgot Password" link and you will be emailed a temporary access code to enable you to log in to reset your password. Once inside your TWIMS account click on the "Harvest Recommendations" tab at the top of the page. There you should see a list of your ranch/ranches in a spreadsheet. Under the "Site Name" tab click on the ranch name. The ranch name(s) will be listed with the MU in which each belongs first. When the next page opens you can scroll down and see how many permits are recommended for the property. Then scroll all the way to the bottom of the page and click on the button labeled "Accept Harvest Recommendations." That's it. You're done. Finished. It's Over. Your permits will be mailed to you from Texas Parks and Wildlife headquarters in Austin and should normally arrive in 5-7 business days.

If you do not have an email address on file with Texas Parks and Wildlife your permits will be claimed by Texas Parks and Wildlife, and mailed to you before the start of the hunting season.

One thing to note that always generates a lot of phone calls is the buck harvest recommendation. For Level 1 MLDP cooperators, this box will always contain a zero. That does not mean you are not allowed to harvest any bucks during the upcoming season. The zero simply means that you will not be issued any special permits to shoot bucks on your property. For Level 1 cooperators buck tags are taken from the hunting license, not issued by Texas Parks and Wildlife. Members are encouraged to take only mature bucks (i.e., >4.5 years) as well as all spikes and legal bucks displaying inferior antler characteristics.

Questions pertaining to permit issuance, receipt, or lack thereof should be directed to TPWD biologist, Doug Jobes, at 361-798-2625 or doug.jobes@tpwd.texas.gov

TAKE NOTE!!! LEASE LICENSE CHANGES

Due to a change in Texas Parks and Wildlife's policy, this year all lease licenses purchased for a wildlife management association must be purchased simultaneously. We will no longer be able to purchase lease licenses a few at a time. Thus, if you need a lease license, and want to get it at the drastically reduced price offered to wildlife management associations, then you must purchase your lease license from the LCWMA by September 22, 2015. Lease license applications will be available at the fall meeting for those who attend. If you are unable to attend the fall meeting the form will be available on the LCWMA website (www.lcwma.org) under the FORMS tab. Please print out the form, fill it out, and return it to the LCWMA, along with your payment by September 22, 2014.

LCWMA Policy Reminders

If you know someone who is interested in joining the LCWMA, and would like to be eligible to receive permits for the upcoming hunting season, please make sure they get signed up before August 15, 2014. This is the date established by Texas Parks and Wildlife for inclusion in the Managed Lands Deer (MLD) program at all levels. For current members, this means that your 2014 dues must be paid before August 15, 2014, or you may not receive your permits before the upcoming season. You are highly encouraged to pay your 2014 dues as soon as possible, but August 15 is the absolute last day to pay to ensure that your permits arrive on time.

Remember, any member who wishes to receive MLD permits for the 2014-2015 hunting season **MUST** submit herd composition data by the date set forth by Texas Parks and Wildlife in this newsletter (September 2, 2014). Herd composition must be postmarked by the deadline or the applicant will be rendered ineligible to receive MLD permits for that season. These requirements are necessary to streamline the permit issuance process, and allow sufficient time before the hunting season to correct complications that arise, as well as hold new and current members to the same data reporting standards.

2014 Fall Meeting Raffle \$10/ticket OR 6/\$50 ONLY 1000 tickets will be sold

1. Mathews Creed compound bow (Value = \$800)
2. Rugger M77 Hawkeye Predator, .308 Win, stainless barrel with green mountain laminate stock. (Value = \$731.50)
3. Thompson Center Bone Collector Muzzleloader, 50 cal, Weathershield finish, composite stock in Realtree AP Camo. (Value = \$558.50)
4. Henry Golden Boy Lever Action Rifle, .22 Win Magnum . (Value = \$450.00)
5. Thompson Center Venture, .25-06, blued barrel, synthetic stock. (Value = \$430.50)
6. Mossberg 500 Duck Commander Shotgun, 12 ga, synthetic stock in Realtree Max-5 Camo. (Value = \$395.00)
7. \$250 Foreverlast Hunting and Fishing Products gift certificate
8. \$150 Foreverlast Hunting and Fishing Products gift certificate
9. \$100 Cabela's gift certificate
10. \$100 Bass Pro Shops gift certificate

All winners of firearms must pass a N.I.C.S. Background Check or prize will be forfeited. Prizes (#2,3,4,5) must be picked up from Shiner Guns & Ammo (361-594-8268) by November 1, 2014 or prize will be forfeited.

Name:

Phone:

of tickets:

Instructions for collecting incidental observations

Incidental Observations (often called Herd Composition) may be the most valuable data collected on a deer herd. When properly collected, herd composition data can reflect the overall health of a herd and help guide the manager in making proper harvest recommendations.

Herd composition data should be collected between August 1st and September 1st. The fawns have become a part of the herd by this time, yet they are small enough to be easily distinguished from adult deer. Observations outside this period may result in inaccurate data. Observations may be collected any time during the day. However, the first and last hours of daylight are often the most productive for deer seen per hour of effort. Observations **should not** be collected at night because it is too difficult to correctly identify sex and size.

Deer recorded should be viewed through binoculars or a spotting scope. Small antlers are easily overlooked without optical aids. Fawns whose spots have started to fade are also hard to distinguish when they are observed alone. Be sure to look at the hips of deer that you think could possibly be fawns because the hips are the last place to lose spots.

When observing deer in herds it is important that each deer be identified. If a herd of six deer is seen but only four are positively identified, do not record any of the deer. If there are two bucks, three does, and one fawn in a herd, you may easily identify the bucks but may not be sure of the other four unless they are **all individually identified**. When a herd is seen, quickly get a total head count, then go back and positively identify bucks first because they are easiest, then identify fawns, and finally, identify the does making sure not to miss small antlered bucks.

Collect as many samples as you can. If possible, a larger sample size is desirable to strengthen the data and increase the confidence in the harvest recommendations. Observations can be made during routine ranch operations or as a special effort. Observing the same deer recorded on a previous survey is a concern if surveys are conducted too close together (less than 2-3 hours apart). If a conscientious effort is made to record accurate data, a small amount of duplicate recording should not affect the ratio. All deer should be recorded as a buck, doe, or fawn.

Send herd composition, spotlight, and daylight and evening mobile data to your Texas Parks and Wildlife biologist by **September 2, 2014**.

Texas Parks and Wildlife Biologist

Doug Jobes

412 N. Texana

Hallettsville, TX 77964

Please be sure to total your sightings to the right and down before sending in your forms. Also be sure to fill in the name of the WMA the data is being collected for, and a distinguishing ranch name. It is essential that everyone collect herd composition data. The more data that is collected, the more applicable the harvest recommendations made for your co-op will be to your individual ranch. Please follow the instructions precisely. DO NOT RECORD RANCHES IN DIFFERENT CO-OPS ON THE SAME FORM, it causes too much confusion when entering the data.

HERD COMPOSITION DATA DUE: SEPTEMBER 2, 2014

MLDP cooperator Herd Composition Form 2014

WMU please circle one: Vienna South Central West Lavaca West Sandy Creek Honey Creek

Ranch Name: _____

Landowner name as it appears on permits: _____

Please total across and down

Does/Buck _____ **Fawns/Doe** _____

Fawns/Doe

Survey Deadline is September 2nd, 2014

Mail Surveys to:

TPWD Biologist Doug Jobes, 412 N. Texana, Hallettsville, TX 77964

Texas well-owner training set for Aug. 7 in Yoakum

Anyone interested in private water well management in the Lavaca or Guadalupe River watersheds is invited to a Texas Well Owner Network training Aug. 7 in Yoakum.

The training, which is free and open to the public, will be from 1–5 p.m. at the St. Joseph Catholic Church, 210 Schrimmacher St. in Yoakum, said Drew Gholson, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service program specialist and network coordinator in College Station.

“The TWON program is for Texas residents who depend on household wells for their water needs so they can learn about improving and protecting their community water resources,” Gholson said. “The program was established to help well owners become familiar with Texas groundwater resources, septic system maintenance, well maintenance and construction, water quality and treatment.”

He said participants may bring well-water samples to the training so they may be screened. The cost is \$12 per sample, with payment due when samples are turned in at the training. “We invite private well owners to bring in a water sample to be screened for nitrates, total dissolved solids and bacteria,” Gholson said. Well owners who would like to have their well water sampled can pick up two sample containers, a bag and a bottle, from the AgriLife Extension office in Lavaca or DeWitt counties. Bringing water samples to the training is not required, Gholson said, but those wanting to have water samples analyzed must attend the training. He said space is limited, so attendees are requested to register at <http://twon.tamu.edu/training> or by calling 979-845-1461 as soon as possible.

The training is one of 30 being conducted statewide through the Preventing Water Quality Contamination through the Texas Well Owner Network project. Other scheduled trainings include Brazoria, Robstown and Refugio. “The core content of this program is the same as other trainings, but the information is tailored to local water quality issues and aquifers,” he said.

Gholson said more than 1 million private water wells in Texas provide water to citizens in rural areas and increasingly to those living on small acreages at the growing rural-urban interface. “Private well owners are independently responsible for monitoring the quality of their wells,” he said. “They are responsible for ensuring their drinking water is safe. This means they are responsible for all aspects of the water system – testing, inspecting, maintaining – and this training will help them understand and care for their wells.”

Funding for the Texas Well Owner Network is through a Clean Water Act nonpoint source grant provided by the Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. The project is managed by the Texas Water Resources Institute, part of Texas A&M AgriLife Research, the AgriLife Extension and the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences at Texas A&M University.

LCWMA
P.O. Box 524
Hallettsville, TX 77964

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Membership questions?

Call the Chairman at

361-798-6506 or

Email

lavacountywma@gmail.com