



# Texas Organization of Wildlife Management Associations

*“Enhancing Land & Wildlife Stewardship in Texas by Supporting & Coordinating the State’s Wildlife Management Associations”*

[www.towma.org](http://www.towma.org)

## Summer 2007 Newsletter

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### PRESIDENT’S REMARKS

*by Clinton McPhaul*

#### **TOWMA is making progress.**

The Merriam-Webster Dictionary’s definition of “progress” is 1) to move forward; 2) to develop to a higher, better, or more advanced stage. Let me assure you that the Officers and Advisory Committee of TOWMA are committed to doing just that. We have made significant progress in the last few months.

I’m sure that most will agree that the previous newsletter contained useful and interesting information and you will find this issue does the same. Hopefully most of you have visited the new website [www.towma.org](http://www.towma.org). It is a great resource for members and will help to make the management of successful WMA’s as easy as possible. It’s loaded with information and we are continuing to add more content and updates.

Be sure to mark your calendars for TOWMA’s one day conference “Texas Water Matters” on Saturday, August 11. You can register for the meeting by completing the registration form in this newsletter or by using our website to register and pay online. The conference will be held at the Aquarena Center in San Marcos ([www.aquarena.txstate.edu/](http://www.aquarena.txstate.edu/)) and begins at 9:00 a.m. There will be speakers in the morning and touring of the Aquarena Center facilities and glass bottom boat rides in the afternoon. You will find additional information about the conference within this newsletter.

We are acquiring the services of grant writers to assist us in securing funds to bring additional programs and services to our members. (TOWMA is a totally volunteer organization funded by dues, donations and grants) We are also actively working on establishing partnerships that will allow us to provide additional programs and equipment to be used by our members. We are striving to acquire new tools that will enable our members to put additional habitat management practices in place.

TOWMA will hold a two day Spring Conference beginning on February 1, 2008. This will be an educational and fundraising event. Additional details will be available on the website and in our next newsletter.

I’m very excited about the future of TOWMA and the programs and services that will benefit our members. I look forward to bringing you more details about our progress in future newsletters and on the website.

Thanks, Clinton

### NEWSLETTER MAILING LIST

The Spring 2007 newsletter was the first TOWMA has ever mailed to the general membership. Prior to that the officers of TOWMA member associations received

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an occasional newsletter, and it was up to them to distribute it to their membership if they felt it was appropriate. This year we decided to do some direct mailings to the members of *all associations that requested it and for which we were supplied addresses*. Twenty four WMA's furnished mailing lists. That resulted in a mailing of over 5,000 newsletters, but left many more people off the list. If you want your WMA membership included send your comma delimited or Excel Spreadsheet mailing list to the TOWMA secretary at [eschberger@peoplepc.com](mailto:eschberger@peoplepc.com). TOWMA respects your privacy and your information is never sold or made available to any organization other than the service company we hire to do our bulk mailing.

Please remember that current and past newsletters are available on the TOWMA website at [http://www.towma.org/information.php?info\\_id=34](http://www.towma.org/information.php?info_id=34)

TOWMA recognizes and thanks the **Lavaca County WMA** for paying for the Spring Newsletter. If your WMA is willing to pay for this or future issues please advise any TOWMA board or advisory committee member. This issue will cost about \$4,500.

### **AUGUST 11<sup>th</sup> FALL MEETING TO BE A FAMILY AFFAIR**

We are excited to announce that TOWMA's August 11, 2007 meeting will be held at Aquarena Nature Center in San Marcos, Texas. If you haven't made plans to attend this one-day event, add it to your family's to-do list NOW. Don't miss this great opportunity for your family to spend some quality time together. A number of families plan to spend the entire weekend enjoying the many activities available in the area. Check the enclosed registration form for some fun things you can do.

You may remember Aquarena as the amusement park famous for Ralph the Swimming Pig and the mermaids viewed from glass bottom boats. It became part of Texas State University in 1994 and is now known as one the best places in Texas for enjoyable outdoor education, entertainment and learning about Texas water systems.

Since our meeting place celebrates stewardship of aquatic resources, our meeting theme is *Texas Water Matters*. We have a great line-up of speakers with vast hands-on experience conducting research and managing water resources in Texas.

Phillip Wright, NRCS, Hondo, will share water related research results compiled over the last several years at the Seco Creek Water Quality Project. David Bamberger, Lone Star Land Steward award winner and owner of Selah Ranch near Johnson City, will share his fascinating story, *Turning Rocks into Water*.

The new NRCS State Conservationist, Don Gohmert, will discuss NRCS water management initiatives and issues of specific interest to wildlife managers. Douglas Mason, Predator Control Manager for the Lone Star Land Steward award winning Oakridge Ranch WMA near Columbus will talk about his efforts trapping feral hogs, including their impact on water quality, and his partnership with Hunters Harvest to provide feral hog meat to feed hungry Texans.

Last, but certainly not least, former State Representative Bob Turner, a longtime friend to rural Texans, will speak about Issues Facing Rural Texas Land Managers.

Keep checking our website for more details about activities related to the meeting, including Glass Bottom Boat Tours and other family entertainment at Aquarena and in the San Marcos area. If possible, please register and pay online at [www.towma.org](http://www.towma.org) to reduce the workload on TOWMA's volunteers. We hope to see you at 9:00 AM, Saturday, August 11, in San Marcos.

Visit the Aquarena Springs web site at <http://www.aquarena.txstate.edu> .

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## **HOMERSTAD RETIREMENT**

A retirement party was held June 9<sup>th</sup> at the Neasloney Wildlife Management Area for Gary Homerstad. Gary retired from TPWD at the end of 2006 after more than 30 years with the department. His final assignment was in Victoria as Technical Guidance Biologist. Gary may be best remembered as the man responsible for starting TOWMA. Many of Gary's friends and co-workers attended and did not hesitate to "roast" him and relate many stories from his colorful past. We wish Gary well and look forward to his continued active involvement in TOWMA.

## **TOWMA HISTORY - PART 1 - THE BEGINNING**

In 1990 Gary Homerstad became a Technical Guidance Biologist for TPWD Region 4, which in part includes the South Central area of Texas (District 7). That year two new wildlife management associations, West Carancahua Creek and Harvey's Creek, were organized in District 7. The Peach Creek and Belmont WMA had been organized in 1973 and 1985 respectively but by 1990 they were inactive.

Nowhere in Texas were the negative effects of habitat fragmentation more evident than in the south central part of the state. The area within the triangle bounded by Houston, Austin, and San Antonio was becoming increasingly comprised of smaller properties which more often than not belonged to absentee landowners. Starting in 1990, new WMAs began to form at an ever increasing rate and by 1996 there were 26 in District 7. In addition to individual meetings, some groups held joint field days with neighboring co-ops that seemed to work very well. Need was driving the train of WMA organization and expansion, especially in south central Texas.

Homerstad recognized the importance of these associations and realized that they represented the only viable way for Texas landowners to effectively manage their thousands of small properties in a way that would benefit rather than harm wildlife. Wildlife co-ops became a major focus of his efforts and he made a personal commitment to attending as many WMA functions as possible. The concept of reaching a large group of landowners all at one time, as opposed to the normal labor intensive and expensive TPWD practice of one on one consultation, was very apparent to him.

Even though he realized promoting and supporting co-ops dramatically increased his effectiveness, he soon found it difficult or impossible to make every meeting of every co-op. He also knew he was sharing the same information and answering the same questions at all the meetings. In an effort to make better use of his time he came up with the idea of getting leaders from all the co-ops together at one time to disseminate his information and to provide a forum for the exchange of ideas. The individual co-op leaders could then carry what they learned back to their local associations.

Homerstad explains what happened: "I organized a field day/seminar at Cooper Farm that was held June 1, 1996. The target audience was cooperatives in South Central Texas. It was a good field day with close to 200 people present. I proposed the idea of a regional co-op organization to those present. The idea was embraced. Larry Lange was elected President and Jack Holman was elected Vice President that day at the close of the seminar.

"The first formal meeting was held the following September at Cooper Farm. Everyone enjoyed the interaction so much that it was decided to meet twice a year. Soon we had co-ops from outside South Central Texas wanting to join the organization. Two years later, in 1998, we decided to change the name to TOWMA and become a statewide organization. It was, and continues to be, a natural progression."

In the early days the term Wildlife Co-op was most commonly used to describe these



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member organizations. As time went on the term Wildlife Management Association became more common, and today, in the interest of consistency, and to most accurately describe what these associations do, Wildlife Management Association or WMA is the preferred terminology. The gate signs used by most WMAs today carry the term Wildlife Management Association for these reasons.

PART TWO - THE EARLY YEARS will follow in the Fall Newsletter

**SPRING 2008 MEETING SET FOR FEBRUARY 1 & 2, 2008**

The Theme: Taking Care of Texas - *Tools for Texas Land Stewards*

Mark your calendar NOW! You and your family will NOT want to miss TOWMA's biggest and best family-oriented event ever. An experienced event planner is donating her time to work with TOWMA's board and coordinate a meeting that offers something for everyone. Spouses and family will be able to choose from a menu of interesting things to explore, discover and enjoy before, after and during the 2-day event.

This meeting will offer an interesting assortment of presentations about management practices and tools to help us become even better stewards of the natural resources we manage together. A diverse group of highly respected professionals are being invited to speak.

Invitees include Senator Glenn Hegar, District 18, a member of the Senate Committee on Natural Resources, TDA Commissioner Todd Staples, Neal Wilkins, Director, TAMU Institute for Renewable Resources, and Bob Cook, Executive Director of the TPWD.

Successful land managers and representatives from other organizations and state agencies are also being invited, including: Texas Cooperative Extension, NRCS, Texas Dog Hunters Association, Hunters Harvest, Texas Wildlife Association, Texas Farm and Ranch Conservation Council, the Texas Agricultural Land Trust, and HRM of Texas.

We are looking at facilities south of Austin so attendees can visit Cabelas, Aquarena Center, Wonder World, Tanger and Prime Outlet Centers, plus numerous historic shops, music venues, museums and attractions in the Buda, Gruene, and San Marcos areas. The specific location will be posted on our website at [www.towma.org](http://www.towma.org) in the near future. Mark your calendar TODAY!

**BOBWHITE QUAIL MANAGEMENT IN TEXAS**

by Bobby Eichler, TPWD Technical Guidance Biologist

**Reasons for Bobwhite Declines**

Two frequently asked questions natural resource managers hear from landowners these days are: 1) "where have all the quail gone?" and, 2) "how can I get them back?" It is a fact that quail numbers have declined sharply over the past 20-30 years throughout portions of their range, and Texas is no exception. Other bird species which use habitats similar to quail have also shown declines. Many factors have been discussed as to why quail are declining. Factors like the invasion of red imported fire ants, the decline of the fur market and less predator trapping, and land fragmentation are just a few. Although these factors may each play a role, the simple fact is that bobwhite habitat has declined significantly over the past few decades and as a result, quail numbers have decreased.

Most landowners feel the habitat has not changed, but from a bobwhites world (everything less than 2 foot tall) the conditions have changed for the worse. Land use percentages (grazing, farming, and forestry) have not only changed over the past 20-30 years in Texas but the practices associated with each have changed dramatically. Quail populations were highest in the late 1800's and early 1900's. During this period, landowners managed to row-crop small plots as well as graze a handful of animals on small tracts (40-60 acres). These tracts also contained small woodlots and provided an ideal mix for ample food and cover for bobwhites throughout the year.



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Since this period, practices dealing with grazing, farming, and forestry have changed drastically across the state. With the increase of intensive cattle ranching, the native grasslands that quail flourished on have been converted to varieties of tame grasses (bermuda, bahia, etc). These tame grasses have very little if any value to quail. By converting from native grasses, quail nesting and brood-rearing habitat has basically been depleted in ranching communities. Farming has also taken a negative turn for bobwhite production by going to larger scale 'cleaner' farming. The days of small 10-20 acre row-crops no longer exist. Today, farming is conducted on a much larger scale with either intensive plowing or chemical herbicides playing a very important part. With the combination of farming practices, weeds are no longer found in the fields and 'weedy' buffers no longer exist between adjacent crops. Lastly, stubble and spilled grain is normally tilled back into the soil immediately after harvest. Because of these practices, cover and food sources (seeds and insects) have been depleted. The third land use, forestry, has also changed dramatically over the past 20-30 years in the eastern portion of the state. As with farming, forestry has gone to intensive, large scale pine monocultures with many changes in site-preparation methods, intermediate thinning, and rotation length. Pine plantations can provide good quail habitat during early stages and later stages but can become stagnant between stages after canopy closure. The lack of prescribed burning combined with overall changes in pine management has affected bobwhite numbers.

The goal of this article is to inform landowners of the everyday requirements of bobwhites and to help landowners make informed decisions on grazing that may impact quail populations.

### **Bobwhite Requirements**

Bobwhites are considered early succession species. This means that bobwhites prefer and depend on early succession vegetation such as grasses, forbs (weeds), and shrubs that are interspersed with bare ground. These areas are maintained by disturbances, whether it is natural (fire, hurricane) or man-made (discing, mowing).

Early succession communities provide forage in the form of seeds and insects that comprise the quail diet. During the first 6 weeks of a quail chicks life, insects comprise >90% of the diet. After 6-8 weeks of age, the diet turns more to seeds but insects are still important. Insects provide high amounts of protein and energy and can reduce the amount of time that a quail has to forage for seeds, thus reducing predator encounters. In general, the higher the percentage of forbs found in an area, the higher the densities of insects.

Early successional habitats also provide ample cover for nesting, brood-rearing, loafing, and escape from predators. Today in parts of Texas, proper nesting and brood-rearing habitat is likely a limiting factor. Quail nest on the ground and construct nests in native bunchgrasses such as little bluestem, broom sedge, and Indian grass. The general 'rule-of-thumb' for adequate nesting habitat is 250 clumps of native grass per acre. These native grass clumps must also have a dead grass component (previous years growth) or hens cannot utilize them for nest building. Proper brood-rearing habitat must allow for quail chicks, which are about the size of a bumblebee at birth, to easily move and forage on insects while being concealed from aerial predators. This requires proper amounts of forbs and grasses mixed with bare ground. Without native grass and forb communities, quail chicks cannot 'locomote' through turf type grasses such as Bermuda. The importance of proper nesting and brood-rearing habitat for quail cannot be over emphasized.

Quail depend on different habitats for loafing and escape cover. Both habitats are important. Loafing cover can be described as thick overhead but open underneath. A good example would be a native plum or sumac thicket. These areas are used by quail for resting and dusting between feeding periods. The thick overhead protection conceals bobwhites from aerial predators but allows for easy movement underneath. Escape cover is needed for bobwhites to be able to fly or run to when threatened by a predator. Escape cover can be characterized as basically a thicket. Good escape cover in Texas is blackberry, greenbrier, and prickly pear thickets. Lastly, all these



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cover types should be well dispersed and within 200 yards of each other for ideal habitat.

Water is not a concern in most of the bobwhite range. Bobwhites have adapted to metabolize the water from the insects and greenery that they forage on and do not require freestanding water. Quail can also utilize dew found on plants.

Space for living is another important requirement for quail. In superb conditions, individual quail require at least 1 acre throughout the year; using this figure a covey would need a minimum of 15 acres to survive through a year. This low acreage requirement would require that all cover types are interspersed throughout the acreage and that 100% of the area is usable to quail. A more realistic acreage requirement would be nearer to 2-4 acres per quail or 30-60 acres per covey.

### **Grazing and Haying Management Practices**

Today's intensive livestock production and haying practices have contributed to the reduction in quality bobwhite habitat, mainly in the form of eliminating proper nesting and brooding habitat as well as other cover types. Much of the native grass prairie in Texas has been destroyed by converting to exotic tame grasses in order to increase stocking rates. To see a positive change in quail populations in these areas, all cover types must be restored. The ideal method would be to convert exotic tame grasses back to native prairie and to implement proper grazing. There are currently 2 programs through Texas Parks and Wildlife that offer financial assistance for the purpose of converting tame pastures back to native grass communities; Pastures for Upland Birds (PUB) and the Landowner Incentive Program (LIP), if interested, contact your local biologist.

Secondly, grazing systems can have positive or negative effects on quail habitat. Proper grazing is beneficial to quail in prairie communities and is required to prevent grasses from becoming stagnant and rank. Grazing combined with the hoof action causes disturbance which is needed to stimulate forb production.

Unfortunately, often times continuous grazing or poorly managed rotational grazing is the method used throughout Texas and both are detrimental to quail habitat. Rotational grazing can be beneficial to quail habitat and have positive impacts when applied correctly. There are numerous types of rotational grazing systems, but to benefit quail the system chosen must provide pastures with different stages of plant communities on a year-round basis so that all cover types are present. At any given time of the year, some pastures should have at least knee high grasses and shrubby cover. Additionally, pastures must be allowed to go to seed to supply a food source throughout the winter months. Care should be taken to not overgraze during fall and winter so that there is adequate amounts of dead residual grasses remaining through the spring to allow for nesting habitat.

If tame pastures must play a part in your grazing or haying program, some practices may be implemented to offset some of the negative impacts. First, buffers of at least 30 feet should be maintained around the edges of hay meadows and be maintained in 2-3 year herbaceous growth. To accomplish this, just mow, burn, or disc 1/2 to 1/3 of the buffer each year. When manipulating, try to break these areas up so that there is a proper mix of different vegetational growth relatively close to one another. Be careful not to herbicide or fertilize these buffer areas; ideally native grasses and forbs would establish in these buffer areas and if fertilized, tame grasses will out compete desirable natives. Second, over seeding tame grasses with clovers during the winter and with kobe or sericea lespedeza during summer can provide areas for seed and insect production. Lastly, a ranch manager should study soil surveys of the ranch and should allow less productive soils on the ranch to remain in low intensity grass production so that they may revert to native grasses, forbes, and thickets. Ideally, these soils would be dispersed along drainages and slopes throughout the area and would traverse the property.

### **Woodlot Management**

Woodlots can play an important role in the future of quail populations. Traditionally

According to surveys by the National Shooting Sports Foundation:

80% of Americans support hunting but

less than 10% actually hunt.

The 18.5 million that do spend over \$30 billion a year on it

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for the people”  
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by, or for the politicians.*

*Why can't some of them  
grasp that concept?*

speaking, woodlots are not thought of as being quail habitat as much as native range. I feel that with proper management, woodlots can become ideal quail habitat. Currently, many woodlots are either infested in the understory with eastern redcedar or yaupon. Additionally, many woodlots are used as shelter for cattle and mismanagement often occurs. Neither scenario results in good quail habitat.

With the use of some of the management tools such as axe and fire, these woodlots can be improved greatly. Ideally these woodlots would have open understory and 60-70% overhead canopy closure to benefit quail. I believe clearing out much of the eastern redcedar or yaupon (mechanical or fire), then using prescribed burning on a 3-5 year cycle would allow for native grasses and forbes to establish, as well as small thickets of brush for escape and loafing cover. Many of these woodlots have native grasses and forb seeds in the soil seedbank, they just need the right conditions to thrive.

Lastly, once these conditions are achieved within the woodlots, cattle should be excluded and only be used as a tool to help keep these areas from becoming to rank and thick. These areas may be very tempting since there will be an abundance of knee high grasses available. I recommend very light grazing only in late summer for a very short period. If this occurs, be sure to remove cattle while there is still at least 12 inches of residual native grass left. This residual grass is used the following nesting season for nest construction.

This article only covered some very minor basics and did not cover in depth the importance of prescribed burning for quail management. Burning of range and woodlots is critical to maintain the habitats mentioned within this article and can not be stressed enough. Hopefully in the near future, co-ops will get more and more interested in the use of fire and prescribed burning will be restored at a landscape level.

#### **TOWMA WEBSITE**

TOWMA has a new website located at <http://www.towma.org>.

The site includes many features including the following:

- **WMA Locator map.** This clickable map displays member WMA locations on a Texas map.
- **Events Calendar.** Any WMA can submit events to be listed. Send your listings by email to [webmaster@towma.org](mailto:webmaster@towma.org).
- **Weather Map.** Instant access to local, state and national weather, current and forecast, and it will default to your local weather once you enter your zip code.
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- **Catalog.** Want a TOWMA logo shirt or cap? Get it online and pay with your credit card.
- **WMA Resources Area.** This password protected area is used by WMA officers and board members and provides tools to make running their organizations easier.

**NEW!**

**Wildlife and Fish  
Management Calendar  
for Texas and the  
Southeast:**

**A Landowner's Guide**

This hot off the press new publication gives Texas landowners month by month management activities to conduct by species. Developed by Billy Higginbotham, Professor and Extension Wildlife and Fisheries Specialist, this publication provides wildlife managers with details on what they need to do monthly. It is the perfect tool to strategically plan management activities for deer, waterfowl, bass, catfish, quail, doves and more.

Need to learn about feral hog control? It's here! Aging deer by tooth wear or by field judging? It's here! Fish stocking rates and species composition for your farm pond? It's here! Attracting waterfowl to your wetlands? It's here!

This is more than a management guide or a calendar. It is the best of both formats and features beautiful color photos of Texas wildlife each month. A "must have" for landowners serious about managing their wildlife resources.

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**FIRE ANT CONTROL PROGRAM UPDATE**

TOWMA is working with the University of Texas to introduce phorid flies into Texas in an effort to control imported fire ants. Imported fire ants have no natural enemies in the US, which is a primary reason for their uncontrolled expansion. UT and USDA scientists have been working for many years to introduce imported phorid flies (which are natural enemies of fire ants in South America) into Texas and the US as a biological control agent. UT has achieved significant success in introducing two species of flies in the Central Texas and upper Gulf Coast areas. A third species is now being introduced with success in the same areas.

The Bee County Wildlife Management Association, a TOWMA member, has been working with UT since 2005 to introduce the flies into South Texas. Earlier attempts, dating back 10 years or more, all failed due to the harsh and dry environment in the area. The microscopic phorid flies were introduced into two ranches in Bee County in 2005. One effort failed, but the other has resulted in a sustainable population of flies. The ranch with the fly population has a two acre year round irrigation system and this source of moisture is being credited with the fly survival. Once established, the flies spread naturally up to 10 miles a year, mostly down wind. The current Bee County population now covers the entire release site ranch and is moving outward across the County.

Another release site is in Kennedy County, deeper into South Texas. Based on what was learned in Bee County, the landowner created a one acre, year around irrigated site where the flies were released. Currently two species of flies are thriving and spreading from the original site. It is believed that the flies expand outward when there is sufficient moisture, and when a drought occurs they consolidate to any available moisture source, then expand again when the drought breaks. These "refuge sites" appear critical to fly survival in dry regions.

TOWMA has held four orientation meetings to determine landowner interest in introducing flies on their properties. There was sufficient interest for TOWMA to establish a Fire Ant Control Program to be conducted in conjunction with UT. Ranchers from Bee County along with UT personnel will conduct regional landowner training schools to teach them how to introduce and monitor the flies. TOWMA is currently searching for \$8,000 in grant money or donations to purchase the equipment needed for processing the flies and ants. If you are interested in helping with the funding, contact TOWMA Treasurer Jimmie Eschberger at 512-304-0676 or email him at [eschberger@peoplepc.com](mailto:eschberger@peoplepc.com).

If you are interested in attending the training programs once they are scheduled contact Jack Holman, Fire Ant Committee Chairman, at 979-732-7503 and add your name to the notification list.

**TOWMA BROWN HEAD COWBIRD TRAPPING PROGRAM UPDATE**

Cow birds lay eggs in songbird nests, and leave songbirds to raise their babies. They also push songbird eggs out of the nest to reduce competition. Cowbird babies are often larger than songbird babies which is a significant advantage in the fight for food. Since cowbirds can lay 40 eggs a season in 40 different nests, cowbirds are widely identified with declines in songbird populations.

Some people wrongly think cowbirds are the white birds seen in pastures around cattle. These are cattle egrets, not cowbirds. Cowbirds are totally black and the males have a brown head. They are about the size of a robin and are very common in rural Texas.

TOWMA has had an active cow bird trapping program since 2004. LCRA provided TOWMA with 46 traps and they are widely used by individuals within TOWMA member wildlife associations in 14 Texas Counties. Program director Jim Trickett administers the program and provides annual trapping reports to TPWD.

TOWMA's 2007 Cowbird Trapping program is in the final stages of reporting. This year will closely match or surpass 2006 captures. Reports from 13 of our 14 counties

**TOWMA needs your help**

Please contribute to the TOWMA website:

1) articles for the **Technical Library**

2) **Best Practices**, lessons you have mastered or learned about running a WMA.

3) Photos posted in the **Photo Gallery**.

4) Items for the **Classifieds** section.

5) Submit **Links** to significant websites and resources.

Send to [webmaster@towma.org](mailto:webmaster@towma.org)

**Remember, the TOWMA website is constantly evolving and will be expanding through 2007 and beyond. Keep checking back for new information.**

You are also encouraged to submit items for inclusion in future newsletters by emailing them to [newsletter@towma.org](mailto:newsletter@towma.org)

indicate a continuing presence of large populations of cowbirds. An early start by some trappers, undertaken to provide bait birds for the remaining traps, indicated large numbers of birds early in the year which quickly dropped before the March 1 trapping season started.

TOWMA continues to loan out traps to WMAs across the state. We now have traps as far away as Dallas. Enhancing songbird populations is the purpose of the project. Painted Buntings are being seen in some areas and a Red Breasted Grosbeak was trapped and safely released around Cat Springs. Cardinals are thriving and numerous other songbirds are being seen again by some trappers.

The traps fit into the back of a standard pickup truck for easy transportation and site repositioning. They are reassigned when trappers no longer want to trap. This past season 5 traps were reassigned and trappers met half way to transport. Traps must be maintained and repaired by the trapper. They also need to be winterized to prevent winter damage.

TPWD Biologists must certify trappers before the trap is put into service. This is usually a 2-hour course available at many TOWMA and TPWD events.

The 2007 trapping season is over, but capture results are preliminary since a few trappers have not reported yet. Current totals show the program has removed 2,366 cow birds. Of those, 1,495 (63%) were females. A female cowbird lays an average of 40 eggs per season, although as many as 70 have been recorded. If those 1,495 cowbirds had been allowed to lay the average of 40 eggs, then 59,800 eggs were taken out of circulation. Depending on the number of eggs the cowbirds would have destroyed in each songbird nest, it is likely that between 60,000 and 240,000 songbirds were given the opportunity to live through the TOWMA trapping program in 2007. Natural mortality would have reduced that number significantly by the time the birds reached maturity, but the results are still very significant.

TOWMA extends its sincere thanks to Jim Trickett for his hard work and dedication in managing this program, and to all the trappers who participated.

For more information about our cowbird trapping program visit [http://www.towma.org/information.php?info\\_id=51](http://www.towma.org/information.php?info_id=51).

**PRESCRIBED BURNING**

TOWMA promotes the use of prescribed fire as a key habitat management tool. It is one of our most effective and cost efficient tools for restoring forage vitality and controlling invasive brush species. Combined with rotational grazing it closely emulates the way nature managed habitat before humans screwed up the system. And if you can't trust Mother Nature, who can you trust?

Prescribed fire...

- ...increases production of forage and browse
- ...promotes ecological diversity in native grasslands
- ...suppresses most brush and cacti species
- ...increases nutrient cycling
- ...controls pests and parasites

**PRESCRIBED BURN EQUIPMENT IS AVAILABLE FOR RENT**

The summer prescribed burn season is almost here, and TOWMA has a burn trailer available for rent that is equipped with most of the equipment needed to conduct a prescribed burn. Only four wheelers or other vehicles are needed in addition to what comes with the trailer. This first trailer is stationed in the South Texas area (Victoria, Beeville, Corpus Christi) and is available through the Coastal Bend Prescribed Burn Association. To reserve the trailer contact Scott Mitchell in Victoria at 361-576-0022 (office) Monday through Friday, 8:00 AM to 5:00PM.

The trailer is available to anyone qualified in its use for a rental fee of \$50 for 24 hours or \$75 for 36 hours. This nominal rental fee (for about \$15,000 worth of equipment) is used for maintenance of the trailer and it can be paid over the phone with a credit card or by cash or check at time of pickup. Additional trailers will be available in other

Be sure to check the WMA Locator Map in the new TOWMA website and **make sure the location and information for your WMA is correct.**

Some of the information used to generate the map is old and has no doubt changed. If you find errors email your corrections to [webmster@towma.org](mailto:webmster@towma.org)

TPWD gets numerous requests from landowners trying to find a WMA in their area. They will now be referring these requests to the TOWMA site. Keep your listing current and let the TOWMA WMA Map become an important part of your membership recruiting efforts.



*She told me we couldn't afford beer anymore and I'd have to quit.*

*Then I caught her spending \$65 on makeup and I asked her how come I had to give up stuff and she didn't.*

*She said she needed the makeup to look pretty for me.*

*I told her that was what the beer was for.*

*I don't think she's coming back.*

locations as funds become available for their purchase.

### **GATHERING DEER HERD COMPOSITION DATA**

Herd Composition data (often called incidental observations) 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 1 and September 10.** 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.

**All deer recorded must 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.

Ideally, a minimum of 150 deer should be identified. If possible, a larger sample size is desirable to strengthen data and increase confidence in harvest recommendations. Observations can be made during routine ranch operations or as a special effort. On smaller ranches (<300 acres), it may not be feasible to obtain 150 deer observations, but efforts should be made to get at least 50. Members of Wildlife Management Associations should get at least 30 deer observations for ranches <300 acres and 50-100 deer observations for ranches >300 acres.

Observing the same deer recorded on a previous count is not a concern. If a conscientious effort is made to record accurate data, a small amount of duplicate recording should not affect the ratios. All deer should be recorded as a buck, doe, or fawn. Recording bucks according to number of antler points is also beneficial. The information can be used to measure changes in the antler structure of the buck herd over time.

You can download the collection form from the TOWMA website by clicking the link in the "Important Notices" box on the home page here: <http://www.towma.org>

**Please submit data by September 10th to your local TPWD wildlife biologist.**

### **HUNTER EDUCATION CLASS AVAILABILITY**

We are often asked how to find a hunters education class for a child or grandchild. Simply go to [http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/learning/hunter\\_education/city.phtml](http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/learning/hunter_education/city.phtml) for a complete listing of scheduled classes, listed both by city and date.

Every hunter (including out-of-state hunters) born on or after Sept. 2, 1971, must successfully complete a Hunter Education Training Course. Minimum age of certification is 12 years and cost is \$15. If you were born on or after September 2, 1971 and you are:

- under 12 years of age, you must be accompanied.
- age 12 through 16, you must successfully complete a hunter education course, **or** you must be accompanied.
- age 17 and over, you must successfully complete a hunter education course; **or** purchase a "Hunter Education Deferral" and you must be accompanied.

Accompanied means: By a person who is at least 17, who is licensed to hunt in Texas, who has passed hunter education or is exempt (born before Sept. 2, 1971), and you must be within normal voice control. Proof of certification or deferral is required to be on your person while hunting.

Every year, over 30,000 youth and adults in Texas become certified in hunter education -- a certification that lasts a lifetime and is recognized by all states and provinces requiring hunter education.

## TOWMA Needs Operating Funds

If you like what TOWMA is doing and would like to provide financial support, you can mail donations in any amount to the address below. TOWMA is a 501(C)(3) organization and your donations may be tax deductible - check with your accountant.

For information on becoming a TOWMA Sponsor or Advertiser

Click on the "Advertising Opportunities & TOWMA Sponsorships" button in the main button bar of our website at <http://www.towma.org>.

TOWMA  
P. O. Box 701  
LaGrange, TX 78945

*This calendar is a TOWMA member benefit →*

**LIST YOUR  
ASSOCIATION'S EVENTS  
HERE AND IN OUR  
WEBSITE**

*Email your  
announcements to  
ljones@towma.org*

## TOWMA MEMBERSHIP

Any Texas Wildlife Management Association can become a member of TOWMA by completing an application and paying the \$25 membership fee. Individual members of these associations automatically become TOWMA Associate Members and may attend all member meetings. Individuals who are not member of a WMA may become Affiliate Members by paying dues of \$10 per year.

You can join by mailing the application attached to this newsletter, along with your check, or by signing up on line on our website. Since we are a volunteer run organization at this time we prefer you to join on line at <http://towma.org>. This method saves us considerable time and effort.

You may pay by credit card and your membership information will automatically be entered into our member data base (credit card numbers are not recorded). You will receive newsletters and email alerts at the address you provide. Membership renewal notices will be emailed when your 12 month membership is near expiration. You can renew on line.

By providing your WMA mailing list in digital, comma-delimited format you can place your membership on our mailing list to receive notices and newsletters like this one. Member information and addresses are never disclosed to third parties.

## CALENDAR

- **July 13-14, 2007** - Texas Hunter Safety Education Course - LaGrange - LaGrange City Hall - \$15 - FMI: 979-242-3322 or see the TOWMA website calendar
- **August 11, 2007 - 9:00AM** - TOWMA Fall Meeting, "Texas Water Matters" - Aquarena Center - Texas State University in San Marcos - 921 Aquarena Springs Road (see separate article and registration form for more information)
- **August 29-30, 2007** - South Texas Wildlife Conference - Cotulla - FMI: Helen at 800-839-9453
- **September 25 to 28, 2007** - Four Day Prescribed Burn School at Cooper Farm. Put on by Colorado & Fayette County Cooperative Extension. Visit <http://www.ranchmanagement.org/burn> for more information and to register
- **October 6 & 7, 2007** - 16<sup>th</sup> Annual Texas Parks & Wildlife Expo - Austin. FMI: Ernie at 512-389-4472 or [ernie.gammage@tpwd.state.tx.us](mailto:ernie.gammage@tpwd.state.tx.us)
- **October 13, 2007** - North Central Fayette County WMA Annual Meeting - Cooper Farm - FMI: Greg Pleasant at 979-540-2744
- **October 23-24, 2007** - Playa Lakes Symposium - Amarillo - FMI: Ken at [kcearley@ag.tamu.edu](mailto:kcearley@ag.tamu.edu) or 806-651-5760
- **November 3, 2007** - Bee County WMA Hunters Welcome Luncheon - Featuring Al Brothers - 11:30 - 1:30 - Bee County Expo Center - Admission free with a current Texas hunting license. FMI: [www.bee-county-wildlife.org](http://www.bee-county-wildlife.org)
- **2007 Hunter Extravaganza Shows**  
Houston - August 3-5 - Reliant Center  
San Antonio - August 10-12 - Freeman Coliseum  
Fort Worth - September 7-9 - Will Rogers Center
- **February 1 & 2, 2008** - TOWMA Spring Meeting - "Taking Care of Texas - Tools for Texas Land Stewards" See separate article and watch website for details

*Note: most of these events are listed with more information in our website Calendar at [http://www.towma.org/events\\_calendar.php?view=all\\_events](http://www.towma.org/events_calendar.php?view=all_events).*

TOWMA  
P. O. Box 701  
LaGrange, TX 78945



### Membership Application

Please print carefully so we can read your information

WMA name: \_\_\_\_\_ County: \_\_\_\_\_

President/Contact Person: \_\_\_\_\_

(This Person will be the voting TOWMA Board Member representing your WMA unless changed in writing)

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone #: \_\_\_\_\_ FAX #: \_\_\_\_\_ EMAIL Address: \_\_\_\_\_

WMA ANNUAL DUES are \$25

Join or renew your membership online at <http://www.towma.org>

You may also make checks payable to TOWMA and mail to P. O. Box 701, LaGrange, Texas, 78945