

WILDLIFE & HABITAT NOTES

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Now is the time for brush control

January and February are the months to work on brush control projects in the Hill Country. The only shrub requiring control in most instances is Ashe juniper (cedar). Once it reaches a height higher than 3 feet, cutting is the most practical way to remove it.

Areas to remove include small cedar growing around the base of trees and other places where an abundance of cedar already exists. Don't let cedar grow up to form a solid cedar break, shading out plant diversity.

Choose a method for cutting cedar which is both selective and least disturbing to soils. Hand cutting is practical for small cedar. A skidloader with hydraulic shears is a good way to remove larger quantities of cedar. They can be rented in some small towns like Rocksprings for local use.

Winter is the best time of year to cut cedar for

Bird Houses for Supplemental Shelter

Several species of cavity-nesting birds can use a little help nowadays. Bewick's wrens, ash-throated flycatchers, titmice, chickadees, elf owls and screech owls all depend on woodpeckers to provide nesting cavities in dead trees (snags). It doesn't take much of a house to encourage bewick's wrens to nest. I've seen them nest in an empty tin can or an old boot in an open shed or garage.

On warm and sunny days, you can already hear permanent resident birds like Bewick's wrens

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various reasons. First of all, it is not so hot for the laborer. Since most deciduous trees and shrubs have lost their leaves, you can get a better idea of what to cut and what to leave so you don't open up areas too much. Also, you won't disturb neotropical birds which nest here such as the golden-cheeked warbler and black-capped vireo. They arrive in the Plateau during the month of March.

To qualify as “Habitat Management” for the wildlife appraisal exemption, you must cut either 10 percent of a designated area or 10 acres, whichever is smaller, on your property. ◇

starting to sing to attract a mate. They will soon be looking for a place to nest. Ash-throated flycatchers don't start arriving until later in February and into March.

Now is the time to clean out existing nest boxes and also construct and put out new boxes. Be sure and construct boxes using materials and dimensions recommended for each species. A good place to learn more about specifications is the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology or the Texas Parks and Wildlife websites.

Use specifications for the species which are closely related in size and family. For instance, use specifications for the Carolina wren for the Bewick's wren.

According to Texas Parks and Wildlife guidelines, 1 nest box per 10 acres or up to 40 nest boxes for small birds need to be set out to claim this qualifying activity for the wildlife tax appraisal.

Follow-up surveys to determine occupation rates and fledgling success throughout the nesting season is highly recommended.◊



Golden-fronted woodpeckers are a common excavator of nesting cavities in dead trees eventually used by other species of birds.

Managed Lands Deer Permits Deadline

The end of the deer season for landowners in the Managed Lands Deer Program at Levels 2 and 3 is February 28. Those at Level 1 had their antlerless season end on January 17. Remember that all deer age, weight and antler data must be submitted to Texas Parks and Wildlife by April 1.

Since most of you are clients, you can just send the raw data to me. I'll enter it into the appropriate spreadsheet and then upload it into TWIMS. If you prefer to do it yourself and need the latest spreadsheet, let me know, or you can get it from Ryan Schmidt, the local TPW biologist for Val Verde and Edwards

Counties.

If you have already reached your harvest quotas for the season, send your raw data to me as soon as possible.◊



Young buck sharing meal with a raccoon.

"All deer age, weight and antler data must be submitted to Texas Parks and Wildlife by April 1"

Plant of the Month

Pearl Milkvine

Pearl Milkvine (*Matelea reticulata*) is one of my favorite native plants.

It is found along the Gulf Coast, and in north-central, southern and western Texas. It is surprisingly fairly common yet easy to overlook. It is a climbing vine with heart-shaped leaves and a flower that is not very showy but exceptionally beautiful when seen close up.

When I first moved to Del Rio in 1977 the first thing I did was remove all the native vegetation that was growing in my yard. In my defense, half of the yard ended up in a vegetable garden for awhile.

After realizing my mistake, I have spent the last 33 years trying to get native plants back into the yard. It has taken awhile but my efforts in



Pearl Milkvine growing in backyard.

gathering seeds, bulbs and cuttings has finally paid off. I now have a yard full of a variety of native plants.

Who else do you know that has a huisache tree in the front yard, a liveoak and hackberries in the back along with mountain laurel, tropical sage, autumn sage, rose pavonia, agarita, littleleaf sumac, Roemer acacia, flame acanthus, lantana, Western soapberry, cenizo, Mexican sage and anacahuita?

Please see *Pearl* on page 4

A Little About This Newsletter and Myself

Most of you who receive this are already my clients so don't hesitate to forward this newsletter to your friends. I hope to put out a newsletter at least once a month. I want to use this medium to share habitat management tips with you as well as to remind you about deadlines and meetings of interest and to discuss timely topics which may be helpful to you in your wildlife and land management.

Most of you know who I am by now but just in case, let me tell you a little about myself. My name is Sylvestre Sorola but everyone calls me Junie. I was raised in San Antonio where I attended Holy Cross High School. I became a Fighting Texas Aggie after receiving my Bachelor's of Science Degree in Wildlife and Fisheries Sciences from Texas A & M

University in 1972. For 35 years I worked as a Wildlife Biologist for Texas Parks and Wildlife here in Del Rio until retiring in 2008.

Since I learned so much about wildlife and habitat management throughout my career, I decided not to let my experience go to waste. So, I hit the ground running after retirement and started doing consulting.

Services which I am providing include: deer and nongame wildlife census, plant inventories and endangered species surveys. I also prepare Wildlife and Habitat Management plans for the Managed Lands Deer Permit Program and for the 1-d-1 wildlife tax valuation. I provide assistance in acquiring permits and complying with program requirements. ♦

Deadline for Wildlife Exemption Annual Report Extended in Edwards County

*“many landowner’s had not received the
deadline letter”*

Some appraisal offices require an annual report of accomplishments to maintain the wildlife exemption. Edwards County is one of those requiring one every year while most others ask for one periodically.

I attended a workshop on the subject sponsored by Texas Parks and Wildlife and the Edwards County Appraisal Office in Rocksprings on January 16. Most landowners there had received a notice about the meeting and a letter reminding them that the deadline to submit annual reports was January 29. When it was learned that many landowners had not received the deadline letter Bruce Martin, chief appraiser, announced that for those who did not receive the letter the deadline would be extended to the end of February. For more information, contact the Edwards County Appraisal Office at 830-683-4189. ◇

Pearl from page 3

Of all those plants, Pearl Milkvine is my favorite. It is unpretentious but when you look closely at the flower it has reticulations on the petals and the stamens form the shape of a pearl. Look for it when outdoors and I think you’ll agree that it truly is a native plant worthy of landscaping use. ◇

Guidelines and intensity levels for qualifying activities for the wildlife exemption may be found at the Texas Parks and Wildlife website or your local tax appraisal office. I can also email them to you.

For questions or comments email: ssorola@stx.rr.com
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