

FOREST STEWARDSHIP BRIEFINGS

Timber ◇ Wildlife ◇ Water ◇ Soil ◇ Best Management Practices ◇ Forest Health ◇ Recreation ◇ Aesthetics

STATEWIDE TREE INVENTORY

from Texas Forest Service press release dated March 25, 2009

For more information:

- <http://txforestservicetamu.edu/main/article.aspx?id=1721>
- <http://txforestservicetamu.edu/main/article.aspx?id=112&ptaxid=146&dtaxid=168&taxid=244> *Click on Texas's Forests Overview - 2008*

This past spring, Texas Forest Service unveiled its first-ever statewide tree inventory, which showed the state is poised to take the lead in emerging alternative energy and ecosystem service markets.

The Forest Inventory and Analysis (FIA) initial report shows Texas has 60 million acres of forestland - more than any other state in the continental United States. Of that, 12 million is located in the Piney Woods of East Texas with the remaining acreage spread across the state.

This statewide "census for trees" provides a science-based foundation for better management of the land.

The inventory helps identify brushlands and encroaching woody vegetation such as mesquite and juniper. The invasive woody vegetation can soak up water and shade out the sun that rangeland grass needs to grow, which creates a problem for cattle raisers.

The results also show that Texas is positioned to profit from alternative energy and ecosystem service markets focused on carbon sequestration and the conversion of woody biomass to energy.

"Texas Forest Service consistently strives to serve the landowners of the state by attracting and supporting new markets. There is a trend that Texas landowners' interest is shifting from agriculture production to wildlife and recreation. With the information provided by this latest inventory, TFS can provide landowners with the technical assistance they need to

help them manage what they have," Tom Boggus, TFS interim director said. "It is one of our (TFS) goals to keep forests in forests."

The inventory provides comprehensive data for local, state and regional decision-makers to better plan, set policy and allocate resources.

Now, for the first time, Texas has a tool for detecting long term changes in the state's forests and woodlands. Previously, just East Texas was inventoried and the area, volume and species composition of forestland in the rest of the state wasn't known.

The inventory is a 10-year process that began in January 2004 and won't be complete until 2014. Despite being just halfway through, results are expected to remain fairly steady. Once complete, the second 10-year cycle will begin, allowing for data comparison.

"This field inventory will provide never before available change-over-time information about the rate of forest clearing, invasiveness, growth, removals and mortality," said Burl Carraway, TFS sustainable forestry department head. "It will give us a baseline for the future."

The Southern Research Station implements the FIA program in the 13 southern states in partnership with each state forestry agency. The Southern Research Station is part of the Nation's largest forestry research organization - USDA Forest Service Research and Development.

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MOTHER KNOWS BEST

by TPWD Staff Biologist

For more information:

- <http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/huntwild/wild/rehab/>
- <http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/huntwild/wild/rehab/orphan/>
- <http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/huntwild/wild/rehab/list/>

Most folks have a soft spot for small “cuddly” little critters. This soft spot is often the downfall of nature trying her best to care for her creatures.

One scenario that is played out time and again across the State this time of year is the weekend trip to the hunting lease. A walk through the woods will turn up many surprises including an occasional deer fawn. No mother was seen running off and a quick look around the area confirms it – the mother has abandoned the baby (not really). It is quickly bundled up and taken home to be cared for so that it will not die. A quick meal of Homogenized and Pasteurized Vitamin D Supplemented milk and we should be good to go – right? Wrong! At that point, the insides of that little deer are going into total revolt. That fawn was better off where you found it!

Typically, a mother deer will bed her young and then go off in search of food, or possibly move to another spot to catch a well earned nap. If she has twins, she will make them bed in separate spots well away from each other and she will go and find her a distant spot for her bed. This means that if a predator happens to find one fawn, one is sure to survive. Or if that predator happens to run across her first, she can lead it from her young. She will usually only spend about 30 minutes a day with her young feeding and caring for them until they are strong enough to keep up with her.

Contrary to popular belief, if your scent is in the area, a mother deer will just think that something really smelly has messed with her fawn, but she will still care for it. She will probably move it to another spot to hide it from the intruder, but will not walk off and leave it.

Baby birds also fall into the same scenario on many occasions. Either they tumble from the nest jostling with brothers and sisters for the best spot, or possibly they are on their maiden voyage from the nest and just haven’t mastered the trick of flying yet. These little feather balls on the ground are sure to die – right? Not necessarily. Often, one of the parents will try to move the little fellow into a relatively safe spot and keep caring for it. Usually, it will only take a little time and persistence, and the flying deal will work itself out. Birds especially have a better chance of survival if the parents are the ones trying to show it what a good meal is all about rather than people trying to improvise. Again, the old adage that it has my smell on it so the mother won’t take care of it is false; smell isn’t a factor – most birds can’t smell.

All sorts of other critters fall into this same pattern from the hissing little opossums to raccoons to..... The best advice in general is that “momma knows best.” Except in some unusual cases, the best option we have during one of these encounters is to look, enjoy the wonders of nature, and then leave quietly.

GOVERNOR HOGG PECAN

On the evening of Texas Independence Day, March 2, 1906, Texas' former Governor James Stephen Hogg and his daughter Ima were visiting in the home of his law partner, Frank Jones, of Houston. During their conversation, the Governor told Jones and his daughter that when he died he wanted no monument of stone, but “Let my children plant at the head of my grave a pecan tree and at my feet an old-

fashioned walnut tree. And when these trees shall bear, let the pecans and the walnuts be given out among the plain people so that they may plant them and make Texas a land of trees.”

Late the next morning, Governor Hogg died quietly in his sleep. Shortly after his burial, two pecan trees were planted at his head and a native black walnut at his feet.

from the Texas Forest Service website—Famous Trees of Texas

For more information:

- <http://famoustreesoftexas.tamu.edu/TreeHistory.aspx?TreeName=Governor%20Hogg%20Pecan>

LONE STAR LAND STEWARDS 2009

The ability to manage land in difficult times, through extended dry periods and economic downturns, is the hallmark of a good land steward. The Lone Star Land Steward Awards program recognizes private landowners for excellence in habitat management and wildlife conservation. Here are some of this year's winners:

Pineywoods—Round Bottom Ranch, Bastrop County; Bob Long and family. The goals of Round Bottom Ranch are to restore healthy upland and wetland habitats and to create high quality habitat for the endangered Houston toad, as well as a variety of other game and non-game wildlife, all within the context of a profitable livestock operation.

Brush thinning and prescribed fire have been used to reduce the density of understory brush and enhance the growth of native grasses and forbs. Wetland enhancement and fencing around ponds have improved habitat conditions for the Houston toad and other aquatic species. Since 2002, the ranch has participated in

intensive Houston toad monitoring activities conducted by Texas State University. The Long family has made the ranch available to visitors, media, students, and agency staff with interest in Houston toad conservation and habitat enhancement using prescribed fire.

Post Oak Savannah—Wells Ranch, Gonzales/Guadalupe Counties, Howard and Jeanice Williamson. For more than a century, the Wells Ranch near Leesville has been a family-owned cow-calf operation and received the Family Land Heritage Award. The Williamsons have worked to maintain the natural ecology of the land, rejecting the option of replacing native grassland with coastal bermudagrass, and retaining much of the timberland on the property. Using rotational grazing and prescribed fire, they are able to manage a healthy cow-calf operation and a successful chicken production facility. Mr. Williamson has been in the forefront of water conservation issues in the area and has hosted numerous management field days.

from Texas Parks and Wildlife Dept. News Release dated April 24, 2009, from Steve Lightfoot, TPWD, Austin, TX

For more information:

- <http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/newsmedia/releases/?req=20090424a>
- http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/landwater/land/private/lone_star_land_steward/

LEOPOLD CONSERVATION AWARD WINNER

On May 27 in Austin, Selah-Bamberger Ranch Preserve in Blanco County received the 2009 Leopold Conservation Award for Texas from Sand County Foundation and Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, part of the department's Lone Star Land Steward Awards program.

The Leopold Conservation Award honors the legacy of Aldo Leopold (1887-1948), considered the father of wildlife ecology. His collection of essays, "A Sand County Almanac," remains one of the world's best-selling natural history books.

"In the 1930s, Aldo Leopold and his family bought a worn out Wisconsin farmstead and lovingly nursed it back to health, said Brent Haglund, Ph.D., Sand County Foundation president. "Likewise, Mr.

Bamberger and his family applied the same kind of insight, patience and skill to restore productivity and beauty to the degraded lands they purchased. I couldn't think of a more fitting recipient of the award that bears Leopold's name."

Ranch founder J. David Bamberger went looking to buy the worst ranch in the Hill Country, explaining that he deliberately wanted to show how overgrazed and damaged land could be restored and made healthy again by removing invasive cedar trees, replanting native grasses, light/rotational cattle grazing, prescribed fire, and other tools.

"I'm very proud of every award we've ever received, but I think this is the most prestigious," Bamberger said.

from Texas Parks and Wildlife Dept. News Release dated May 27, 2009, from Tom Harvey, TPWD, Austin, TX

For more information:

- <http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/newsmedia/releases/?req=20090527a>
- <http://www.bambergeranch.org/>
- <http://www.sandcounty.net>

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TAMU OFFERS ONLINE COURSES

The Continuing and Professional Studies Office at Texas A&M University has announced new online continuing education programs in “Ecology and Society” and “Urban Wildlife Management.”

According to the university, the Ecology and Society course teaches participants how to “synthesize and interpret” data related to ecosystems using diversity, interrelationships, cycles, and energy, and is designed to promote curiosity and understanding of both ecology and sustainable development.

The Urban Wildlife Management course examines the various issues affecting human-wildlife interface management strategies. It also features comparisons of natural and urban ecosystems, discussions on impact of wildlife management policies, and integrated topics pertaining to ecology and sustainability.

To learn more about the Urban Wildlife Management course, go to <http://capso.tamu.edu/all-programs/urban-wildlife/>; for the Ecology and Society course, go to <http://capso.tamu.edu/all-programs/ecology-society/>.

For other online courses, go to <http://capso.tamu.edu/>.



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