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Soil Conservation News

Hunters are often falsely accused of causing declining game populations, but treatment of the land has a much greater effect on the number of game animals that are hunting pressure. The basic habitat requirement for most wildlife is a year-round supply of food and water plus a safe place to hide, rest, and raise young. Wildlife is usually found on properly treated rangelands where the primary grazing animals are domestic livestock such as cattle. Rangelands which provide adequate food, cover and water for domestic livestock can also be an excellent habitat for wildlife.

Need place to hide
Wildlife like the whitetail deer need a place to hide from their enemies and to raise their young. They prefer to remain in secluded areas during the day and then venture out into the open during the evening, at night, and during early morning hours. They need a place to bed down in the shade during hot weather and out of the wind and cold during winter months. Wildlife such as deer and quail do not prefer vast expanses of broken wooded areas. They are much more at home where there are frequent clearings and open areas interspersed with woody plants. They are often referred to as edge animals because they do much of their feeding in the open but near the edge of brush, trees and overhead escape cover. Deer, especially, prefer openings which provide

more forbs, and other succulent food plants, while nearby woody cover provides a place to hide out quickly, if the need arises. Even though brush is important to deer, too much brush as well as too little brush may be a disadvantage. Brush can be cleared in an alternate sequence so that a pattern for wildlife can be established. This alternate brush open area pattern enhances growth of grasses and forbs as well as provides escape cover for deer. These patterns are beneficial to both deer and

livestock. As a landowner, you must decide which type of brush pattern will best fit into your livestock and wildlife operation. You must determine the proper width of brush strips and open areas to balance livestock forage with brush and browse cover for deer and other wildlife. Kinds and amounts of browse plants as food sources for deer must be evaluated also. Many sportsmen will pay premium lease rates to hunt on land where the brush has been cleared in strips or patterns. Fair offered some tips on items to keep in mind when planning brush control. When both livestock and wildlife use the same land, ranchers have to compromise between the needs of both kinds of animals when planning brush management. The idea is to control enough brush to increase food production for livestock and leave enough to browse and cover for wildlife. Leaving 25-35 percent of the land in brush will keep a large number of deer and other wild animals, if the brush is arranged in the right patterns.

Fishing Report

Here is the fishing report as compiled by the Parks and Wildlife Department as of August 17.
Bastrop: Water clear, normal level; black bass fair to three pounds on topwaters and buzz baits; striped bass fair to three pounds on live bait; catfish good on stinkbait.
Cornwall: Water murky, normal level; black bass fair to six pounds early on worms; striped bass, crappie good in 18 feet of water on minnows under 1097 bridge; catfish good to five pounds on minnows, worms and doughbaits.
Corpus Christi: Water clear, eight feet low; black bass slow; crappie good to five pounds; striped bass with stringers to 50 fish; white bass fair; catfish slow and small.
Payette: Water clear,

normal level; black bass fair to 10 pounds on dark worms; hybrid striped bass, crappie slow; catfish fair. **Livestock:** Water clear, 84 degrees, normal level; black bass fair to six pounds on worms, surface plugs early and late; striped bass and small, some largest below dam; white bass good with stringers to 15 fish; crappie slow; yellow catfish fair to 65 pounds; blue catfish good to 18 pounds; channel catfish good to three pounds. **Rayburn:** Water off color up river, normal level; black bass good to five pounds in topwaters and worms, some school bass; striped bass, crappie excellent in submerged brush; catfish good to 12 pounds in crappie holes; one yellow catfish to 31 pounds on crappie-bait and four-pound test line.

Somerville: Water clear, 72 degrees, normal level; black bass slow; white bass spotty; crappie good in morning and afternoon; Livestock: Water clear, 84 degrees, normal level; black bass fair to six pounds on worms, surface plugs early and late; striped bass and small, some largest below dam; white bass good with stringers to 15 fish; crappie slow; yellow catfish fair to 65 pounds; blue catfish good to 18 pounds; channel catfish good to three pounds. **Travis:** Water clear, 87 degrees, eight feet low; black bass fair to two pounds on topwaters and worms; striped bass, crappie fair in submerged brush; white bass slow; catfish fair to eight pounds on red and reel baited with crawfish.

Port Aransas: Redfish has been excellent in good numbers to around 12 pounds; trout good to six pounds on spoons, Bingo and Rebel lures; no live bait available. **Corpus Christi:** Trout and redfish slow because of lack of live bait; some medium sized trout on spoons and dark plastic worms; good number of sand trout and croaker on dead shrimp along Intracoastal, Laguna Madre and Corpus Christi Bay. **Flounder:** gizzard good at night to five pounds in good numbers. **Port Isabel:** Trout and whiting good on Causeway in evening; kingfish, dolphin, wahoo, bonito in good numbers offshore; blue-water about 15 miles offshore; bay fishing good, live bait available.

Business, and development of some of the best universities in the nation were central points in making Texas a leader in attracting new industry. He was emphatic that the economic picture of Texas was in the midst of radical change from its domination by mineral development, to an economy of electronic-related businesses. Spicer also said that such development did not have to be totally associated with Austin, since modern communication and transportation made distances shorter. In the panel discussion, Bob McKay, director of research for the state industrial commission, outlined the results of a new study on why businesses have located in Texas the past five years. McKay said the over-riding factor given was the new

Town, country church confab

Church leaders from across Texas will gather at Texas A&M University September 19-20 to discuss the best of issues related to fostering community understanding and cooperation. The occasion is the 38th annual Town and Country Church Conference, says a sociologist with the Texas Agricultural Extension Service, Texas A&M

***** Sports *****

Goose Season likely to open Nov. 5

Area hunters to comment on new split season dates

The goose hunting season in the Eagle Lake area has been proposed as a split season from November 5 to November 11, and November 19 through January 22, but the duck season is proposed with two splits, according to the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. Eagle Lake hunting organizations are questioning the split dates and a spokesman will appear at a wildlife department commission hearing on August 31 in Austin where the season dates are scheduled to be adopted. The department also will consider hunting season dates for sandhill cranes at that meeting. According to Johnny Meitzen, owner of Johnny's Sport Shop here, hunting organizations in the area are being contacted for their reaction to the proposed season splits, and suggestions that might be presented at the commission hearing. He asked that anyone with comments call him, if they haven't been contacted.

The reason area hunting organizations might suggest different dates is that hunters who flock to the area each year already have scheduled vacation time and the new dates, different from previous years, will conflict. Also, some local businesses believe there will be very little interest in hunting during the traditional Christmas vacation period, so season dates should coincide with that slowdown. According to a wildlife department news release, the split goose season is for the area east of U.S. Highway 81 that splits the state from south to north on a line approximately from Laredo through San Antonio, Austin, Waco, Fort Worth, and Wichita Falls. Bag limits proposed for that area are five "light" geese (Snow, Blue, Ross) and one Canada goose or one black brant and one white-fronted goose, for a maximum daily bag of seven geese. West of the line, the

season is proposed to run straight through from November 1 through January 22. The season on Canada Geese is proposed to be closed in Anderson and Henderson counties. A new proposal on a three-segment duck hunting season is being considered for that portion of the state outside the High Plains Mallard Management Unit in the Panhandle-South Plains region. In what the department calls an effort to provide optimum hunting recreation for the most hunters, the three-segment dates will be from November 5-11, Nov. 19-27, and Dec. 10 to January 1, 1983, and must close by January 22, 1984. The number of splits, if any, and the dates of the season could be set between those dates, observing the 60- and 72-day season lengths. An expansion of the sandhill crane hunting zones also is proposed. If approved, a new sandhill crane hunting zone would be created to encompass

virtually all of South Texas, the prairie region west of Houston, southern portions of the Edwards Plateau and as far west as Sonora and Del Rio. That zone would have a season of January 14 to February 12, with the bag limit of three per day, six in possession. This zone includes a buffer area along the coast to assure protection for endangered whooping cranes which spend the winter in and near the Aransas National Wildlife Refuge at Austwell. Past observations of the whoopers indicate the birds are sedentary during the winter and would not be seen in the sandhill crane hunting area. Bill Brownlee, migratory game bird program director, said sandhill cranes do not normally occur in great concentrations in the new zone area as they do in the panhandle, but the estimated 70,000 birds which winter there can provide hunting recreation and perhaps give farmers some relief from crane crop depredation.

understood by most people, therefore they do not consider them important. Habitat management for some of these other important, yet less publicized, types of wildlife should be part of any brush management program. Trees and underbrush should always be kept along streams and bottomland to provide protective cover, den sites and fruit and berry production for these animals. The Soil Conservation Service has technicians available to help plan and apply a brush management program that recognizes and meets the needs of all wildlife. The Columbus Field Office serves this area. It is located at 316 Spring Street in Columbus.

Brush control can aid wildlife management on property

Control brush to improve deer, dove, quail, turkey and other wildlife? "Yes," says Connie M. Fair, district conservationist with the USDA Soil Conservation Service (SCS) in Columbus. According to Fair there are over 197,000 acres of range and pastureland in the Colorado Water Conservation District which his office serves that are invaded by woody plants so thick that growth of good food plants for wildlife is limited. "Selective brush clearing with many small natural-looking openings allows sunlight to reach the ground, surfaces and removes the competition for moisture so better food plants can grow. More available food means wildlife is healthy and can increase in numbers," Fair says. "The openings also grow more grass for livestock, he continues. Fair offered some tips on items to keep in mind when planning brush control. When both livestock and wildlife use the same land, ranchers have to compromise between the needs of both kinds of animals when planning brush management. The idea is to control enough brush to increase food production for livestock and leave enough to browse and cover for wildlife. Leaving 25-35 percent of the land in brush will keep a large number of deer and other wild animals, if the brush is arranged in the right patterns.

The size of areas left in brush depends on the topography and how tall and thick the woody plants are. If the brush is tall with not much cover near the ground or in an open stand, uncultivated areas have to be larger than when the brush is thick at heights less than five feet. Flat country usually needs larger areas left in brush than hilly or rolling country. Areas must be large enough to contain browse for food and thick enough to let wildlife hide. Cleared areas must not be so wide that cover is too far away. As a rule of thumb, brush should not be less than 100 feet wide and cleared areas should not be more than 1,000 feet wide. "Deer and other wildlife will still use grasslands after any type of pattern is installed," Fair says. "The landowner must decide which type of pattern will best fit into his livestock and wildlife operation." Wildlife habitat can be improved in some brushy pastures by thinning the stand of brush rather than by strip or pattern control. By use of an axe, bulldozer or other means, useless trees and brush can be removed and, desirable temporary areas left. Thinning lets more sunlight reach low-growing plants. Running oak, some of the acacias such as catclaw and blackbrush and several other good browse plants can often be profitably burned or shredded to keep them in reach and promote regrowth. Tender new shoots are much better feed than old mature growth.

Burning or shredding every three or four years maintains plenty of choice food for deer and livestock. Shredding or burning also temporarily increases the amount of forbs and grasses. Habitat for quail, cottontail rabbits and other small animals can be improved by piling or stacking brush removed from treated areas. Brush piles, though temporary, are ideal cover and help to increase the number of quail and other animals on cleared pastures. Many types of wildlife exist besides the few we think of most often such as deer, turkey, quail and dove. The ecological role of predatory animals, furbearers and others are not

understood by most people, therefore they do not consider them important. Habitat management for some of these other important, yet less publicized, types of wildlife should be part of any brush management program. Trees and underbrush should always be kept along streams and bottomland to provide protective cover, den sites and fruit and berry production for these animals. The Soil Conservation Service has technicians available to help plan and apply a brush management program that recognizes and meets the needs of all wildlife. The Columbus Field Office serves this area. It is located at 316 Spring Street in Columbus.

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