

Parks Department Gives Feeder Advice

Many Texans enjoy watching birds and other wildlife.

Whenever the discussion of setting up habitat comes up, the question of whether to use feeders or not is not too far behind.

While arguments can be presented on both sides, the issue essentially comes down to a question of proper maintenance of the feeders and the quality of the foods provided in the feeders.

Texas Parks and Wildlife have many programs that depend on the use of feeders.

The Texas Hummingbird Round-Up, Project Feederwatch, the Great Backyard Bird Survey and others depend on feeder-based information for valuable survey data.

What is the avid birder and naturalist to do?

Any time a high concentration of one species congregates in a small area, the potential for infections is increased.

Think about taking a road trip with a group of friends and somewhere along the way, somebody starts coughing. What happens next?

A week later, you probably started coughing also.

The same principle can occur at wildlife feeders if we are not

careful.

One way to minimize this is to clean feeders and the areas around them thoroughly on a regular basis.

Rake the area below the feeders to remove spent seed hulls and feces.

Wash and fully dry the feeders and their perches between fillings.

These procedures will help to reduce the probability of spreading infection.

Once in a while though, you may find an animal around your feeder that you just feel is sick.

Whatever your reason for concern, the wise practice is to discontinue feeding, do a thorough cleanup and allow all concerned materials, including the ground, to dry thoroughly.

Since some infections can be spread by contaminated foods, you may also want to replace the feed you have been using.

Only then would I recommend resuming your feeding routines.

Another misconception is that "If I use a feeder, birds won't migrate."

This common question reflects the misconception that birds migrate because of a lack of food. Nothing could be further from

the truth.

Just look at the hummingbird. Hummingbirds of several species, including the ruby-throated hummingbirds, rufous hummingbirds, calliope hummingbirds and others, begin leaving the northern reaches of their ranges in mid-to late June and early July.

Residents of these areas know that their plants are often just coming into bloom, yet the birds are disappearing.

They are coming south in search of abundant foods that are beginning to bloom here — not fleeing an area of famine!

Keeping feeders active does not disrupt migratory behaviors.

Why should one choose to use a feeder?

It increases the probability that you will enjoy wildlife without having to travel from your place of residence.

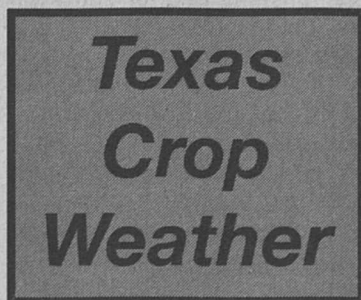
Often, in the dead of winter, properties with feeders are the only locations where there are a variety of birds or other wildlife.

Feeders provide you with an opportunity to observe wildlife closely, often much closer than you would in more "natural" situations.

Feeders are often the easiest locations to photograph wildlife.

Using a feeder is a personal choice — there are valid points to be made on both sides of the argument — if you are maintaining a clean, healthy feeder and safe environment around your feeders.

If you would like to contact your local biologist, see our Web site at tpwd.state.tx.us/wildlifebiologist.



With few exceptions, most of the state's topsoil remained critically dry.

And in regions where a little rain came, strong winds followed, taking moisture with it.

Conditions were particularly severe in the Panhandle and the Southwest, reported Texas AgriLife Extension Service agents.

"Soil moisture levels are still the same, basically non-existent," said Rick Auckerman, AgriLife Extension agent in Deaf Smith County, west of Amarillo.

"Continued dry and windy conditions in the county are keeping the center pivots running and farmers looking for the next rain cloud.

"Irrigated wheat is surviving; the dryland producers are starting to plow down what little is left."

"Last week we received 1 inch. The next day the wind blew 60 miles per hour, and the moisture was lost," said J.D. Ragland, AgriLife Extension agent in Floyd County, near Lubbock.

"Strong winds have occurred all week and have dried out all moisture received last week," said J.R. Sprague, AgriLife Extension agent in Lipscomb County, near the border with the Oklahoma Panhandle.

"Dryland wheat is now in disaster state," said David Graf, AgriLife Extension agent in Sherman County in the northern Panhandle.

"Many acres are already abandoned or plowed under to prevent blowing."

"Dryland wheat is about to burn up due to high winds and lack of moisture," said Kyle Kight, AgriLife Extension agent in Crosby County, east of Lubbock.

"Corn is being planted this week, and water will have to be applied to get it up."

The following summaries were compiled by Texas AgriLife Extension district reporters this week.

South Plains

Warm and dry conditions prevailed, with strong winds adding to the desperate conditions.

Soil moisture was short to very short.

Corn planting started, but water will have to be applied to get it to emerge.

Irrigation wells have been running non-stop, preparing for the May 10 cotton planting start date.

Dryland farmers will not be able to plant cotton until they receive a good rain.

Winter wheat was in poor to fair condition.

Most wheat fields have headed out under continued irrigation.

Pastures and ranges were in poor to fair condition.

Livestock were in mostly fair condition with producers continuing to supply supplemental feed.

Southeast

Rain late in the week helped with dry conditions, but pastures could use more moisture. Temperatures have been moderate with still some cool evenings.

The spring and winter grasses were mature.

Leaf blight was found in some wheat fields, but for the most part the crop looked good with large heads and well-filled kernels.

Corn was fair.

The sorghum looked good.

Pasture weed control continued, and some producers have applied fertilizer.

Livestock were doing well.

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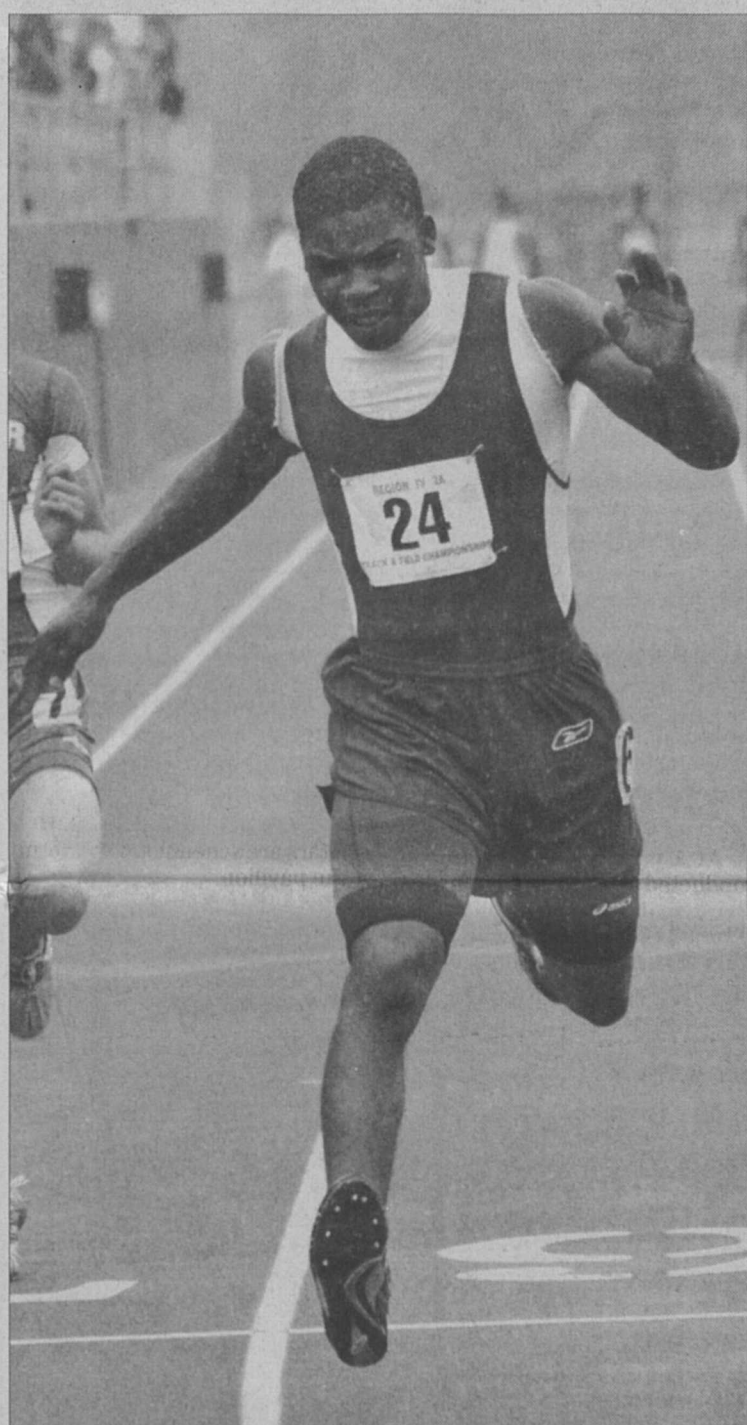
STEERS

#1	#2
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300-400 lbs 118-130	100-115
400-500 lbs 113-118	93-111
500-600 lbs 108-117	95-107
600-700 lbs 98-109	84-94
700-800 lbs 88-98	80-87

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#1	#2
200-300 lbs 110-130	95-109
300-400 lbs 95-113	85-95
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Dominique Weeks crosses the finish line at the regional track meet.



Britt'nee Stevenson takes the baton from Annicia Williams during the regional track meet.

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