

15th Annual Attwater's Prairie Chicken Festival Set April 4-5

Personnel at the Attwater Prairie Chicken National Wildlife Refuge and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service volunteers will be conducting special guided tours of the refuge during the fifteenth annual Attwater's Prairie Chicken Festival, April 4-5.

The celebration was conceived in 1995 through cooperative efforts from the Eagle Lake Chamber of Commerce, Houston Audubon Society, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in an effort to enhance the awareness of this imperiled bird.

The entrance to the refuge is on FM 3013, about 6.5 miles northwest of Eagle Lake.

The first lek tour leaves promptly at 7 a.m. with tours leaving after that time as vans fill up. Additional guided tours begin at 10:30 a.m., 12 p.m., and 1:30 p.m.

on both Saturday (April 4) and Sunday (April 5).

The early morning tours have a chance of possibly seeing Attwater's prairie chickens on the "booming" grounds, but there is no guarantee.

All tours will take visitors into an area that is normally closed to the public and will touch on such topics as refuge management techniques, prairie chicken recovery efforts, and coastal prairie ecosystem issues. Tours are expected to last less than 2 hours, and will begin at the refuge Visitor Center.

The refuge is hosting additional events as well. Birdwatchers, whether experienced or beginners, can enjoy a walking tour from 8:45 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. each day.

Following the walk, hop on a van and tour the refuge's Teal

Marsh and Pintail Marsh from 10:45 a.m. to 12:15 p.m. each day. These guided tours will be led by experienced birders.

For the native plant and wild-

flower enthusiasts, a special afternoon walking tour from 1 p.m. - 2:30 p.m. will bring visitors "up close and personal" with many of the native prairie grasses

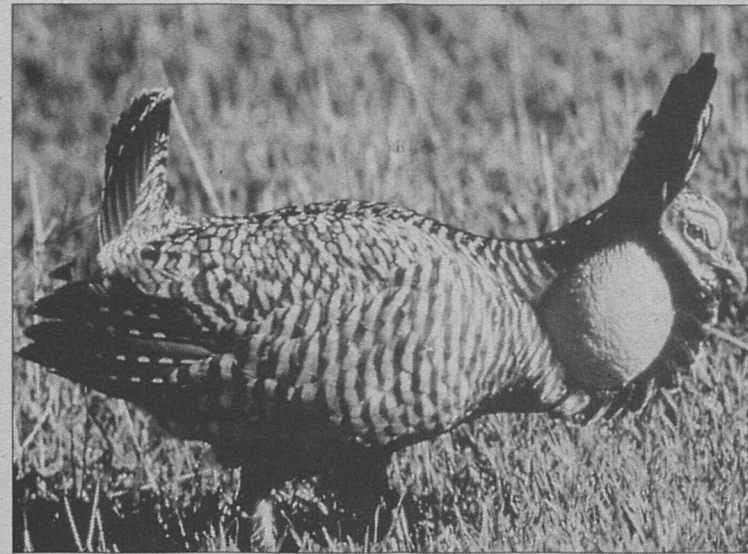
and flowering plants.

The Native Plant Society's Kathy Burns will lead this walk on Saturday and Sunday and give those involved a greater appreciation of the coastal prairie ecosystem.

All the walking and driving

events will begin at the refuge Headquarters. All events are free of charge.

Those interested in learning more about the festival should contact the Attwater Prairie Chicken National Wildlife Refuge at (979) 234-3021, ext. 12 or 18.



March Specials

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Rice FFA Team Competes In San Antonio

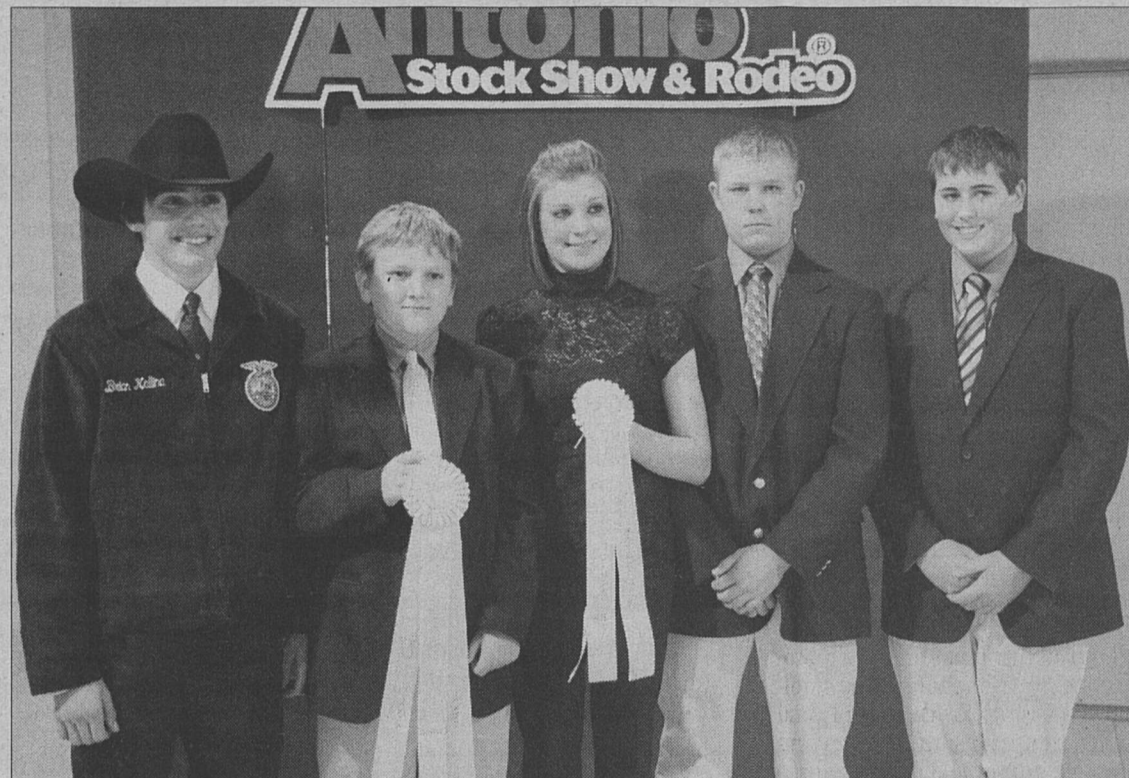
Rice Consolidated High School FFA members recently competed in the Junior Commercial Steer Feeding and Management Contest at the San Antonio Livestock Show. Kari Beth Mahalite placed third overall and also raised the Best Pen of Steers.

We would like to send a big thank you to Mr. David Little, Dr. Steven Golla, DVM and Monte Williams, AST for the many months and hours spent with us studying for the test, preparing for the speech and figuring record books.

Those members who participated were Brian Kallina, Kari Mahalite, Chad Bittner and Michael Waligura. Great Job!

Brian Kallina also participated in the Junior Commercial Steer Feeding and Management Contest at the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo.

He did a great job representing the Chapter. Thanks again to Mr. Little, Dr. Golla and Mr. Williams for all their help.



From left to right: Brian Kallina, Lucas Little (Brenham 4-H), Kari Mahalite, Chad Bittner, Michael Waligura.

Congratulations to Pfc. Sergio Rodriguez on completing his courses to become a Pharmacy Specialist. Graduation ceremonies were held on March 16 at Brooks Army Medical Center at Fort Sam Houston in San Antonio. Sergio will continue to work towards his Associate's Degree to become a Pharmacist. Proud parents are David F. and Maria Cardenas along with brothers Brian and Zachary of Eagle Lake.

Congratulations on your graduation son! We love you and God Bless you always!

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Planting Tips For Attracting Songbirds

The magical sounds of birds can be pleasing to the ear and relaxing to the soul.

In fact, when surveyed, most people voted bird song as their favorite sound, followed by other nature and water sounds.

So what can you do to fill the air on your property with bird song?

Providing what birds are looking for, water, food and shelter, will often do the trick.

Water is the easiest habitat component to offer.

Most small birds prefer sources of fresh, shallow water, with gently sloping sides.

Moving, gurgling or bubbling water is an even bigger hit!

Providing the other two habitat components, food and shelter, can be a little trickier because the plant material needs to be carefully selected.

Many birds enjoy a meal of insects, berries, seeds or fruit.

Take a look around your prop-

erty and start a list of plants (preferably native varieties) that provide foods enjoyed by birds each month.

To that natural supply, add more varieties of plants that produce berries or fruit in each season of the year.

Plant choices will vary according to where you live in the state, but several of the bird favorites listed below may work in your area for each season.

In the spring, many birds feed on protein-rich insects that are available in abundance as the birds prepare for nesting and raising young.

Spring blooming trees and shrubs that entice insects by providing nectar and pollen include many Hawthorn species (Crataegus spp.), mayhaw (Crataegus aestivalis), Mexican and flatwoods plums (Prunus spp.), flowering dogwood (Cornus florida), buttonbush (Cephalanthus occiden-

talis), honey mesquite (Prosopis glandulosa), acacias (Acacia spp.), Eastern and Texas redbuds (Cercis canadensis), agarita (Mahonia trifoliolata), rusty blackhaw viburnum (Viburnum rufidulum) and coral honeysuckle (Lonicera sempervirens).

Many of these plants also produce summer seeds and fruit.

As the spring turns to summer, seeds and berries become more abundant.

Good summer seed sources include many wildflowers in the sunflower family, such as Indian blanket (Gaillardia elchinea) and purple (Echinacea spp.), coreopsis species, black-eyed susan (Rudbeckia hirta) and others.

There are shrubs that produce summer berries:

Carolina buckthorn (Rhamnus caroliniana), Chokecherry (Prunus virginiana), Brasil (Condalia hookeri), Coma (Sideroxylon celtastrinum), Granjeno/Spiny hackberry (Celtis pallida), many Sumac species (Rhus spp.), Anagua (Ehretia anagua), Texas Persimmon (Diospyros texana), Narrowleaf Forestiera/Elbowbush (Forestiera angustifolia), Turk's cap (Malvaviscus drummondii), Lotebush (Ziziphus obtusifolia), Chile pequin (Capsicum annuum), Barbados cherry (Malpighia glabra), Mustang grape (Vitis vulpina) and more.

Many of these produce berries well into the fall.

As fall and winter arrive, plants that offer berries or seeds become hugely important as resident birds stock-up to survive

the colder winter months and as migrating birds pick up food along their way south. In addition to the plants listed earlier, great fall and winter plants are:

American beautyberry (Callicarpa americana), Coralberry (Symphoricarpos orbiculatus), Gum Bumelia (Sideroxylon lanuginosa), Elms (Ulmus spp.), Farkleberry (Vaccinium arborescens), Sugar hackberry (Celtis laevigata), Roughleaf dogwood (Cornus drummondii), Lantana (Lantana spp.), native hibiscus, wax myrtles (Myrica spp.), prairie asters (Aster spp.) and numerous native grass species.

The small hollies, Yaupon (Ilex vomitoria) and Possumhaw (Ilex decidua), offer nutritious red berries in the coldest weather.

When it comes to shelter, the primary needs are nesting cover and material in the spring and shelter from harsh weather in the winter.

Native bunch grass clumps provide shelter in the winter, as well as nesting material in the spring.

The yaupon, wax myrtle, brasil, granjeno and other thick evergreen shrubs offer good protection from winter weather and predators.

When you have finished planting, sit back and enjoy the soothing sounds of birds enjoying the sweet fruits of your labor.

You won't regret the time and effort, and neither will the birds.

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

Extension Offering Water Harvest Class

The Texas AgriLife Extension office of Colorado County is hosting a Rain Water Harvesting Basics Educational Program on Thursday, March 26 from 9 a.m. - 3:30 p.m. and will have two follow up events on Thursday, April 2 and Thursday, April 9.

These activities will be held at the Colorado County Ag Building located at 316 Spring St. in Columbus.

Educational topics will be: Why We Use Rain Water Harvesting;

How to Measure for a Rain Water Harvesting System; and How to Install and Use a System.

This event will be a "hands on" learning event.

Please come prepared to spend some time outdoors. For more info, please call 979-732-2082.

Extension programs serve people of all ages regardless of socioeconomic level, race, color, sex, religion, disability, or national origin.

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May 2 • \$20 per person
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Bus will leave B&B Grocery in Eagle Lake at 5 p.m. May 2 and will return to Eagle Lake at 9 a.m. May 3. For additional information or to sign up contact Kevin Earls at 979-257-7489 or Sue Ann Scott at 979-332-1168

Greater Union Baptist Church Pastor's Aide Will sell Chicken Dinner plates Saturday, March 28 at the Greater Union Baptist Church from 10 a.m. until sold out.
Plates will consist of fried chicken, potato salad, green beans, cake, bread.
For more information call 979-234-3527, 979-257-6019, 234-2137 or 234-2393.

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