Louisiana Wildlife Insider

IN THIS ISSUE

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

It's that wonderful time of year again, the beginning of hunting season. Hunting, fishing and trapping have always been an important tradition within the United States. Based on a survey by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, more than 37 million people participate in hunting and fishing annually. When wildlife watching activities are included, this number soars to almost 72 million persons enjoying the wonderful things that nature has to offer. As a state agency, the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF) is charged with the responsibility of managing and protecting Louisiana's abundant natural resources. This includes management, conservation and promoting the wise utilization of Louisiana's renewable fish and wildlife resources and their habitats. LDWF uses many techniques and strategies in order to accomplish these goals, including replenishment, protection, enhancement, research, development and education. This is done for several reasons: to provide social and economic benefits to current and future generations; to provide opportunities for knowledge, use and enjoyment of these resources; and to promote a safe and healthy environment for the users of the resources. LDWF does not rely on state general funds to operate, but instead receives funding through the sales of licenses (hunting, fishing, etc.) and federal excise taxes on hunting and fishing equipment. This means that it is the sportsmen of Louisiana that make the management and conservation of our renewable natural resources possible. As a state agency, we tip our hat to you and thank you for making hunting and fishing possible within our state; truly the Sportsman's Paradise!

Sincerely,
Jeffrey P. Duguay, Ph.D.
Editor

Public Dove Hunting Opportunities

BY JEFFERY P. DUGUAY, Ph.D., LDWF Webless Migratory Upland Gamebird and Research & Survey Program Manager

The mourning dove (*Zenaida macroura*) is the most abundant and widespread North American gamebird. More than 38,000 dove hunters harvested over 728,000 doves in Louisiana during the 2014-2015 hunting season. In order to help meet the annual demand for dove hunting opportunities in the state, LDWF manages dove fields on 12 wildlife management areas (WMAs) throughout the state, while additional dove hunting opportunities exist on other WMAs in timber harvest areas that typically have good goatweed (*Croton spp*.) response, as well as on the Kisatchie National Forest Calcasieu Ranger District. Additionally, LDWF leases selected agricultural fields from private landowners to allow for opening day dove hunting by the public.

Some of the public lands available in Louisiana that traditionally offer good opening day dove hunts include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Boeuf WMA, located within Caldwell and Catahoula parishes, typically has 40 acres on the north tract planted in brown-top millet and 30 acres of natural vegetation on the south tract prepared and available for dove hunting.
- Camp Beauregard, located in northeast Rapides Parish, typically has a 30-acre field planted in brown-top millet and also offers several clearcuts with goatweed.
- Elbow Sough WMA, located in southeastern Rapides Parish, is a 160-acre tract with approximately 60 acres managed for dove hunting, planted in brown-top millet and sunflower. Hunting is by lottery draw only for the first two days of the season. After that, it is open to all properly licensed hunters on Saturdays, Sundays and Wednesdays from Sept. 5-27 and Oct. 10 - Nov. 8.
- Loggy Bayou WMA, located in the southernmost part of Bossier Parish, has a 15-acre field planted in sunflower. Loggy Bayou is open only to youth hunters on the first day of the first split of dove season, after that it is open to all dove hunters.
- Pointe-aux-Chenes WMA, located in Terrebonne and Lafourche parishes, typically has 70 acres planted in brown-top and Japanese millet.
- Sandy Hollow WMA, located in Tangipahoa Parish, is very popular with youth hunters. The north tract is restricted to youth hunters and their supervising

adult(s) for opening day only, and has three fields totaling 32 acres planted in brown-top millet. The south tract, open to all hunters, is a 12-acre field planted in brown-top millet.

**Refer to the hunting pamphlet for specific regulations at each WMA.*

In 1994-1995, LDWF began a private dove field leasing program to increase dove hunter opportunities for the opening day of dove hunting. During this first season, 11 fields comprising 1,838 acres were leased from private landowners and made available to the public for opening day of dove season. A total of 788 hunters took advantage of this opportunity, harvesting 1,908 doves. Since that time, the number of dove fields leased by LDWF for opening day dove hunts has varied, with three dove fields leased for the 2014-2015 opening day of dove season where 504 hunters harvested 786 doves.

The private dove fields that LDWF leases are typically agricultural lands producing crops that doves regularly feed on, such as corn and milo. The crops are harvested prior to the opening day of dove season and biologists monitor the fields to ensure that there are good dove populations using them prior to leasing the fields for hunting. In some instances, farmers are paid an additional fee to leave some crops standing in order to provide both cover for hunters and an additional food source for doves. As dove fields are leased for hunting, their locations, acreage and crops harvested will be posted on the LDWF website.

Any properly licensed hunter is welcome to hunt the fields LDWF leases for opening day of dove hunting. The cost to hunt these fields is $10 per hunter for hunters 16 and older, and hunters 15 and under can hunt for free with adult supervision. Hunting begins at noon on the LDWF lease fields and ends at sunset. Hunters can use lead or non-toxic shot. Shot larger than size 7.5 is prohibited. It is not uncommon for hunters to gather together well-before shooting hours begin to socialize while tailgating in anticipation of the opening day of hunting. This is encouraged, however, alcohol possession/consumption is prohibited. All licensed migratory gamebird (including dove) hunters must be HIP certified. HIP certification is free and available wherever hunting licenses are sold.

For a list of WMAs with dove hunting opportunities and a list of private lease fields for opening day dove hunts visit our website at *http://www.wlf.louisiana.gov/hunting*. If you have a field that you would be interested in leasing to LDWF for opening day of dove hunting contact Jeff Duguay at 225-765-2353 or jduguay@wlf.la.gov.

ABOVE: Youth hunters are always welcome to hunt LDWF dove fields. **LEFT:** A successful day of hunting and camaraderie. **BELOW:** A properly prepared dove field at Elbow Slough WMA.

DMAP Harvest Data Trends

BY JONATHAN BORDELON, LDWF DMAP Coordinator

HISTORY

The goal of DMAP is to offer interested hunters, landowners and managers in-depth and professional level technical assistance in managing deer populations and their habitats. In addition, the program is designed to educate, inform and disseminate information to participants, promoting sound deer management and wildlife habitat principles across the state (Durham 2011).

The Deer Management Assistance Program (DMAP) began in 1981 with 129 cooperators covering approximately 250,000 acres. Enrollment continued to increase and eventually peaked in 2005 with over 1,800 cooperators (*Figure 1*). Statewide deer hunting regulation changes in 2006 allowed all properly licensed deer hunters to harvest an antlerless deer any day of the season across most of Louisiana. Many of the cooperators that utilized the program to provide flexibility in the harvest of antlerless deer dropped out of DMAP with this new regulation change. However, enrollment has been relatively stable since recent changes in DMAP regulations were adopted by the Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries Commission in 2011. Enrollment for the 2014 season included 702 cooperators covering 1,569,036 acres. Cooperators are enrolled in all eight physiographic regions which are identified in *Figure 2*.

HARVEST TRENDS

Early DMAP participants were seeking technical assistance for more intensive management practices. They utilized the program to harvest antlerless deer outside of traditional either-sex days. The added flexibility allowed managers to reach antlerless deer harvest objectives. In addition, a growing number of hunters and managers were becoming interested in reducing the harvest of 1.5-year-old bucks in an effort to increase the harvest of older age bucks. This trend continued to grow in popularity across most of our state. In the early 1980s, DMAP antlered bucks 2.5 years old or older made up approximately 15 to 25 percent of the annual harvest (Savage 2000). By the late '80s and early '90s the number of 2.5-year-old and older bucks had reached 35 to 40 percent of the buck harvest in DMAP. In 1999, over 50 percent of bucks harvested by DMAP cooperators were 2.5 years old and older. Most recently, during the 2013-2014 season, 79 percent of bucks harvested on DMAP enrolled properties were 2.5 years old and older. This is the highest percentage of 2.5-year-old and older bucks ever recorded by DMAP cooperators in Louisiana. *Figure 2* illustrates the proportional harvest per age class for each habitat type. Only tiers 1 and 2 were utilized in *Figure 2*. Tier 3 DMAP does not require the removal of jawbones, and bucks are not assigned to an age class.

The focus and desire of cooperators to harvest older age bucks is very evident in the harvest data collected. The decision to limit buck harvest to older age deer is an objective and decision made by the cooperator. For example, DMAP clubs in the bottomland hardwood habitats are harvesting almost as many 4.5-year-old bucks as all other age classes combined. While bottomland hardwood cooperators lead the way, over 50 percent of harvested bucks reported for each habitat type are 2.5 years old or older. While the harvest of 2.5-year-old and older bucks is not promoted or mandated, our biological staff work with cooperators to achieve this objective, if it is the desire of the DMAP participant. Maintaining healthy and productive herds with a focus on habitat management is the primary focus of LDWF's biological staff.

Although much focus and attention is given to the buck harvest, antlerless deer management is an important cornerstone in any successful deer management program. Female harvest exceeds male harvest on DMAP lands. During the early 1990s female harvests were near 50 percent, but higher female harvests began in the late 1990s. Currently, DMAP cooperators are harvesting over 60 percent females. In part, this is common where hunters and managers focus their efforts on the harvest of older age bucks. In addition to habitat management, hunters and managers focus on the harvest of females to balance sex ratios while reducing pressure on the available food resources. This reduced pressure on properly managed habitat will ensure deer are getting the nutritional resources they need to reach their physical and reproductive potential.

Tiers 1 and 2 DMAP cooperators record weight and whether lactation is occurring for all female deer harvested. LDWF biological staff monitor and track reproductive success by analyzing lactation rates of known age females. Age is determined by tooth replacement and tooth wear on the lower jawbone. The age specific data allows a better assessment of herd health and condition by age class. The ability to track, measure and analyze harvest trends makes the data collection aspect of the DMAP program essential. The DMAP program provides the largest sample of known age physical deer harvest data in the state. The data, along with other harvest data and biological collection data compiled by LDWF biologists, are used to help determine hunting seasons and define deer management areas.

QUALITY DEER MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION'S WHITETAIL REPORT

With the exception on an experimental three-parish area from 2002-2005, Louisiana has never implemented a statewide antler restriction aimed at managing for an old-

er age class. Seasons are liberal, providing Louisiana deer hunters plenty of potential days in the woods. However, liberal seasons have allowed hunters to be more selective if they choose while having more days to pursue deer. This was evident in the 2015 Whitetail Report compiled and written by the Quality Deer Management Association (QDMA). Deer harvest trends were broken down into three regions, the midwest (13 states), northeast (13 states) and southeast (11 states). Most states were comparing data from check stations and DMAP areas. Louisiana's numbers were based on DMAP areas alone and do not represent the age structure of all bucks harvested across the state. Most of the information covered earlier regarding DMAP focused on the harvest of 2.5-year-old and older bucks. However, QDMA focused their analysis on 3.5-year-old and older bucks across the 37 states sampled. Four of the top five states were southeastern states, which also have the longest and most liberal seasons. Two of our neighboring states ranked second (Arkansas) and fourth (Texas) in the country when looking at the percentage of 3.5-year-old and older bucks in the harvest. The top state in the nation was Louisiana with 68 percent of harvested bucks during the 2013 season 3.5 years old or older (Adams and Ross 2015). The article and full report is available in the 2015 QDMA Whitetail Report (*http://www.qdma.com/corporate/whitetail-report*).

DMAP harvest trends have demonstrated a noticeable shift over time towards older age buck management and harvest. The success of older age management in DMAP is due to the cooperative effort of its participants. The results illustrated in *figures 2 and 3* were through voluntary restrictions and efforts of DMAP cooperators and the Private Lands biologists that work with them. While DMAP provides management at the property scale, it was interesting to analyze and illustrate statewide harvest trends over the past 25 years.

If you are interested in enrolling in the DMAP program contact Jonathan Bordelon at 225-765-2344 jbordelon@wlf.la.gov

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Adams, K. and M. Ross. 2015. 2015 QDMA Whitetail Report. Quality Deer Management Association. 6pp.

Durham, S. 2011. 2011/12 Annual LDWF Deer Report. 27pp.

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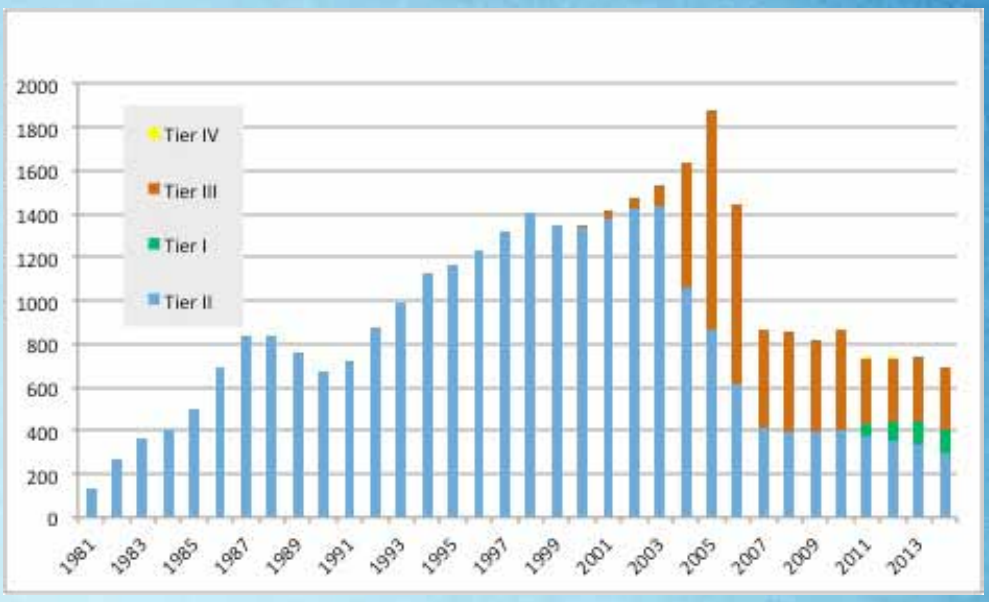
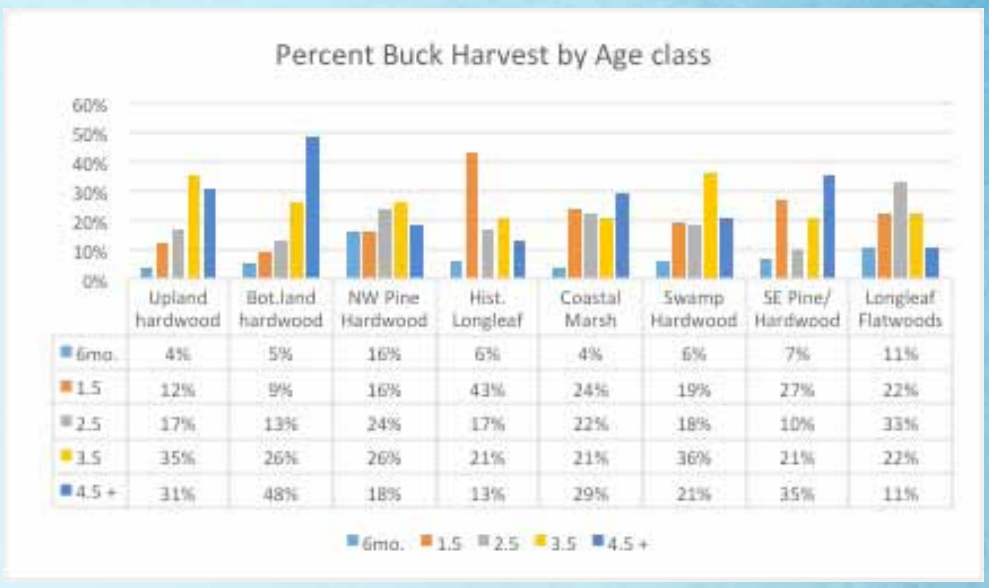


FIGURE 1. Number of hunting clubs enrolled in DMAP from 1981-2014.



	Upland hardwood	Bot.land hardwood	NW Pine Hardwood	Hist. Longleaf	Coastal Marsh	Swamp Hardwood	SE Pine/ Hardwood	Longleaf Flatwoods
6mo.	4%	5%	16%	6%	4%	6%	7%	11%
1.5	12%	9%	16%	43%	24%	19%	27%	22%
2.5	17%	13%	24%	17%	22%	18%	10%	33%
3.5	35%	26%	26%	21%	21%	36%	21%	22%
4.5 +	31%	48%	18%	13%	29%	21%	35%	11%

FIGURE 2. 2013-2014 buck harvest from Tier 1 & 2 DMAP cooperators.

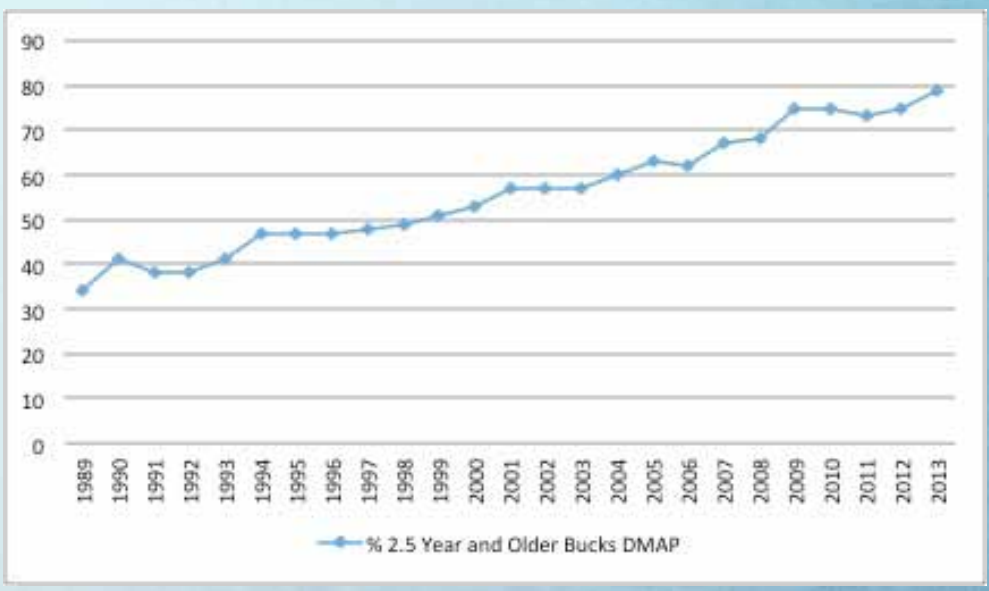


FIGURE 3. Percentage of bucks harvested at 2.5 years and older by DMAP participants 1980-2013.

Hunting Safely in Louisiana Bear Country

BY SEAN MURPHY, LDWF Large Carnivore Biologist

Autumn months give rise to welcoming cooler temperatures and colorful changes in foliage, signaling the beginning of the time-honored tradition of hunting in "The Sportsman's Paradise." Whether experiencing buck fever over that trophy you have been catching glimpses of over the last several seasons, chasing an elusive fox squirrel through bottomland hardwoods, getting tangled in a thicket on a timberdoodle hunt, or trudging through the great Atchafalaya Swamp in pursuit of mallards and wood ducks, you just might be fortunate enough to catch a glimpse of the cryptic Louisiana black bear. The Louisiana black bear, a unique subspecies of the American black bear, is as much a part of Louisiana natural heritage as the brown pelican, American alligator and white-tailed deer - an indicator of the unique and diverse array of habitats present across the Louisiana landscape. The subspecies, which remains state and federally protected as "threatened," has increased in number and distribution within the Mississippi Alluvial Valley during recent years (*Figure 1*), and, as a result, sightings and encounters have increased (especially during autumn months when sportsmen take to the field).

Seeing the elusive Louisiana black bear while hunting can be a thrilling experience, and all who are fortunate enough are encouraged to enjoy the moment. It is important to note that the increase in bear sightings during autumn is not simply a matter of chance or luck. Throughout an entire year and across all seasons, fall months are the most likely time an individual may see or encounter a bear. During this particular time of year, bears enter a biologically and evolutionarily driven phase of their lives termed hyperphagia (i.e., abnormally increased food consumption). It is this period, between the summer mating season and the winter denning season, that bears nearly quadruple their caloric food intake to increase their body fat reserves. These increased body fat reserves for bears enhance the probability of survival through winter months when natural foods are scarce. Although Louisiana is at the southern extent of black bear range in North America and does not typically endure the harsh winter cold of the North, most bears in Louisiana enter a phase of carnivoran lethargy (i.e., lowered heart rate, body temperature and respiration, and prolonged fasting) and den during winter. While some male bears may awaken and make short-distance movements during winter, female bears, which give birth to cubs during winter, will remain in dens with their cubs or yearlings until early spring.

Because hunters typically prefer remote areas during a time when bears move great distances searching for food, the chances of

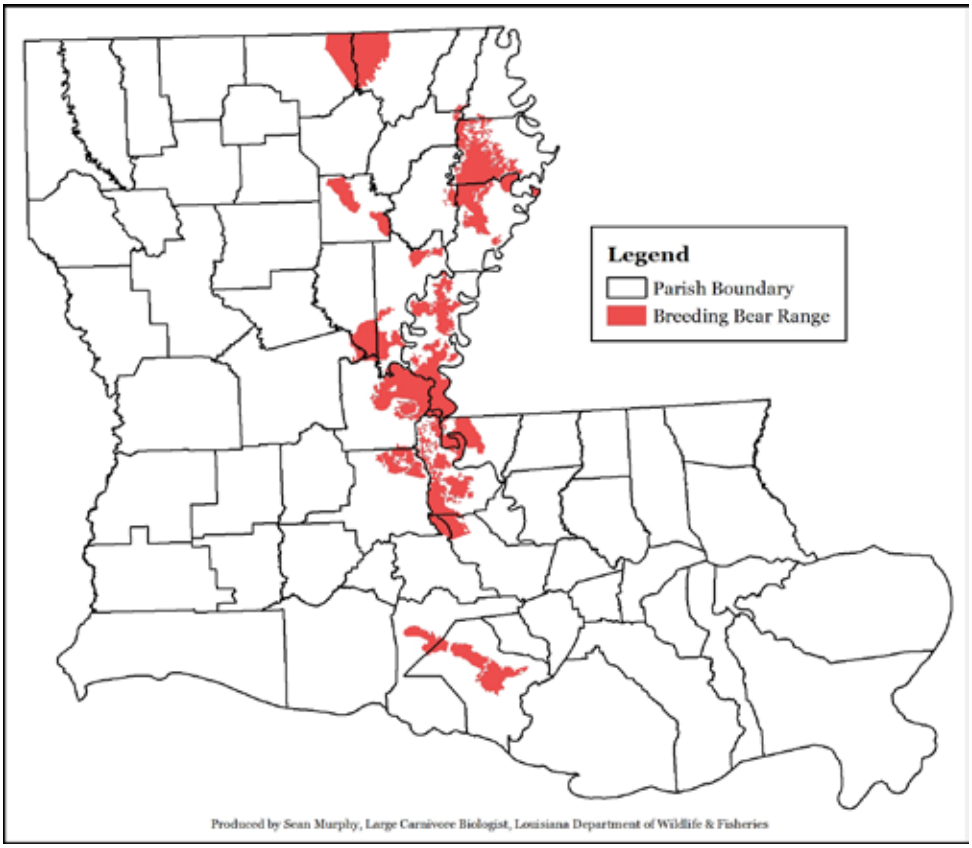


FIGURE 1. Current black bear range in Louisiana. Areas shaded in red indicate the extent of documented breeding bear range in Louisiana, as well as where the probability of human-bear encounters is highest. Modified from USFWS (2015).

close human-bear encounters may increase compared to other times of year. Although black bears are typically shy and solitary animals, and prefer to avoid humans, they rely heavily on their senses of smell and hearing. Because hunters tend to move quietly through the woods, often with their scent masked, these heightened senses of bears may be less effective at detecting hunters. Additionally, bears are very curious animals with relatively poor eyesight compared to other terrestrial wildlife species, and may not even know you are a human if perched high in a tree stand. As a result, there have been reports of bears climbing up a tree in which a hunter is already sitting. To enhance hunter and bear safety in Louisiana bear country (*Figure 1*), refer to the sidebar for detailed measures to help avoid close encounters and recommendations in the event that a close encounter occurs.

The probability of a black bear attack on humans is very low, and there have been no documented bear attacks in Louisiana during recorded history. In fact, nationwide, more people are annually injured or killed by domestic dogs, lightning or being crushed in crowds than by all North American bear species combined. Killing a bear in Louisiana is illegal and punishable by state and federal laws unless in defense of human life. If you encounter a bear or would like more information on bears or hunting in bear country, please call the Louisiana Department of Wildlife & Fisheries Large Carnivore Program at (337) 262-2080 or (337) 948-0255.

AVOIDING CLOSE BEAR ENCOUNTERS

- If baiting for deer, reduce bear access to the bait by raising the feeder at least 10 feet above the ground. Consider applying grease or oil to feeder poles to inhibit bears climbing up them.
- Pay attention to fresh bear sign, such as tracks or scats, and use caution when hunting in areas that have visible evidence of bear activity.
- Communicate with other hunters when bears or fresh bear sign have been observed in the area.
- Be extra cautious on windy days as it is more difficult for bears to hear or smell you if the wind is not in their favor.
- If you have bears move into your area while in a tree stand:
  - If possible, make bears aware of your presence while they are still a reasonable distance away from your stand.
  - Attempt to scare the bear away with an air horn or other loud noise.
  - You may have to stand up or step outside of your stand for the bear to be able to see you.
- Bears are curious and may investigate your stand. DO NOT confuse curiosity with aggression.

IF A CLOSE BEAR ENCOUNTER OCCURS

- Stay calm.
- Assess the situation and decide if the bear is aware of you or not.
- Give the bear an opportunity to identify you as a human.
  - If the bear stands up, it is trying to see, hear or smell to help identify you better. This is not a threat or sign of aggression.
- Keep the bear in sight, back away slowly, speak in a loud firm voice, and either leave the area or detour around the bear.
- Do not run, make sudden movements, or attempt to climb a tree.
  - Running may cause the bear to chase you, which is a natural instinct present in most carnivorous animals, including domestic dogs.
  - A human cannot outrun a bear and bears are exceptional climbers.
- If a bear “huffs”, “blows” or “pops” its jaws, this is a sign of either nervousness or agitation, so slowly back away and give the bear ample room to move.
- Female black bears are typically not protective of their young like brown bears are. If encountered with cubs, a female black bear will often send her young up a tree while she runs off a short distance.
- We recommend all individuals hunting in Louisiana black bear country carry bear pepper spray. In the event that a bear comes in very close proximity, bear pepper spray has been shown to be the most effective deterrent. Unlike a gun, bear pepper spray does not have to be aimed precisely to deter a bear. Bear pepper spray is typically effective at up to 50 feet, and its effectiveness increases with decreasing distance. Bear pepper spray is the recommended personal defense deterrent throughout North America.

Hog Cleaning Safety

BY FRED KIMMEL, LDWF Education Program Manager
JAMES LaCOUR, DVM, LDWF Wildlife Veterinarian

Feral hogs have been present in Louisiana for a long time, but their populations have grown and expanded rapidly in recent years. With this expansion, interest and participation in feral hog hunting and trapping has increased. During the 2013-2014 hunting season, approximately 67,000 hunters harvested 185,000 feral hogs. Feral hogs harbor a number of diseases that can be transmitted to humans and their canine hunting partners. Hunters should be aware of these diseases and take precautions to prevent transmission when they are cleaning, butchering and handling feral hogs.

Swine brucellosis is a bacterial disease that can be transmitted to humans through contamination of open wounds, eyes, nose and mouth with blood, reproductive secretions or amniotic fluid from infected hogs. The swine brucellosis bacteria causes Undulant Fever in humans and may be cured by prompt antibiotic therapy, but may affect a person for life if untreated. Testing of over 1,000 feral hogs by LDWF biologists demonstrated a statewide swine brucellosis occurrence rate of 5 percent.

Pseudorabies is a viral disease in feral hogs that is contagious to most mammals except humans. Dogs are particularly susceptible and may contract it through contact with infected feral hog saliva, urine or feces. Pseudorabies is often fatal to dogs and there is no treatment. In 2014, 10 hog-hunting dogs in Arkansas died after contracting the disease. The statewide incident rate of pseudorabies in feral hogs is about 12 percent.

Leptospirosis is a bacterial disease of feral hogs that can be transmitted to humans via infected blood, urine and other body fluids. The disease causes high fever, joint pain, anemia and liver and kidney infections in humans and can be fatal. About 80 percent of the feral hogs sampled in Louisiana were positive for leptospirosis with 12 percent having active infection.

Other diseases of feral hogs that are transmissible to humans include trichinosis, toxoplasmosis, tularemia and swine influenza. Trichinosis and toxoplasmosis are caused by parasites that can be transmitted to humans by consumption of undercooked pork. Tularemia is a bacterial disease that can be spread to humans by contact with contaminated blood, respiratory secretions, urine and saliva. Humans can be infected by the swine influenza virus through contact with nasal, oral and respiratory secretions from infected feral hogs.

Feral hogs cause significant economic and environmental damage, so hunting or trapping feral hogs is encouraged. However, hunters should take common-sense precautions to prevent disease transmission by wearing gloves and eye and face protection when handling and processing feral hogs. Hunters who are accustomed to cleaning deer, game birds and small game may find this unusual, but it is important to remember that most of the diseases described above are transmitted via contaminated body fluids and secretions. Anyone who has processed game knows that contact with body fluids is a virtual certainty.

SAFE FERAL HOG BUTCHERING REMINDERS

- Always wear rubber, vinyl or nitrile gloves when handling feral hogs. This includes handling raw meat prior to cooking.
- Wear a mask and glasses/goggles or a face shield when processing feral hogs to avoid contamination of your eyes, nose and mouth with body fluids from feral hogs.
- After processing, burn or bury disposable gloves and parts of the carcass that will not be eaten. Do not feed raw meat or parts of the carcass to dogs.
- Never eat, drink or use tobacco products when processing feral hogs.
- Always clean knives, utensils, coolers, cutting boards, etc. with a disinfectant such as diluted chlorine bleach to kill bacteria.
- Wash hands as soon as possible with soap and warm water for 20 seconds or more.
- Always cook meat from feral hogs to an internal temperature of at least 165 degrees F before eating it. Freezing, smoking, drying and pickling does not kill the bacteria that cause brucellosis.

Anthony Ballard, ULM graduate student conducting research in conjunction with LDWF on wild hog diseases.

LDWF Private Lands Program

BY DAVID BREITHAUPT, USDA Liaison/Farm Bill Program Manager

The Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF) manages wildlife habitat on over 1 million acres of wildlife management areas and refuges across the state. Those lands provide a place for Louisiana sportsmen and wildlife enthusiasts to enjoy wildlife in their natural habitats, and serve as demonstration areas for sustainably managed wildlife habitat. A variety of wildlife habitat management practices and harvest strategies have been implemented, monitored and refined on these properties over the years. This adaptive management strategy has provided a great deal of "real world" wildlife management lessons that can be applied to other properties as well. The state of Louisiana encompasses approximately 27.6 million acres. Recognizing nearly 90 percent of those acres are privately owned, LDWF concluded that the most effective way to ensure sustainable management for wildlife across the state was to work hand-in-hand with private landowners. In late 2007, the Private Lands Program was developed to achieve this very goal.

The Private Lands Program has a network of wildlife biologists focused on assisting private landowners in achieving their goals related to wildlife management. The focus of these biologists is much greater than providing recommendations concerning food plot management to increase hunting success. Our goal is to learn the overall objectives of the landowner, evaluate the quality and quantity of wildlife habitat, and determine how the property is impacted by neighboring landscapes. This information is then used to develop a wildlife management plan tailored for that specific property. Landowners seeking wildlife management assistance through the LDWF Private Lands Program will be engaged by a professional biologist, providing them a broad perspective on habitat management practices that will aid them in achieving their wildlife management goals on their property. Management recommendations may include strategies to improve waterfowl habitat, methods for implementing a timber harvest while improving habitat quality and maintaining aesthetics, prescribed burning techniques for bobwhite quail habitat improvement, or specific deer harvest recommendations. Even nongame management objectives can be met through various habitat management practices. Our recommendations focus on the landowners' objectives while acknowledging the real potential of the property given the habitat conditions. If the landowner is already working with a management professional, such as a consulting forester, we do not seek to replace them, but work closely alongside them in an effort to provide the maximum benefit to the landowner and the wildlife on their property.

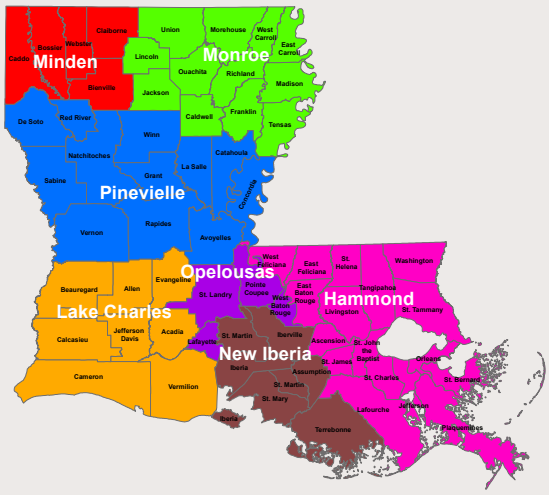
Today, many landowners face challenges associated with invasive plants and animals. Left unmanaged, timber stands in some areas will become dominated by Chinese tallowtree, yaupon holly or Chinese privet. Research conducted on WMAs and other lands across the state has provided insight on how to manage these species. Another challenge for landowners across the state is the ecological damage caused by wild hogs. Our staff, guided by research, management and professional experience, can provide the landowner with management options on how to combat hogs and implement ecological restoration techniques.

Conservation programs that provide cost-share assistance to implement recommended management practices are sometimes available through our partner agencies, such as the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service or Farm Services Agency. Ducks Unlimited, National Wild Turkey Federation, and the Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry are other partners that our private lands biologists work with to improve wildlife habitat conditions on private lands. Our private lands biologists serve as a source of information for such programs and practices.

Whether you manage your property intensively or take a low maintenance approach, we have staff available in each of our field offices ready to assist. There is no charge for the service and no minimum acreage requirements. Contact your local field office for more information and to meet your Private Lands biologist today.

EQUIPMENT AVAILABLE FOR RENT

1. Prescribed Burn Unit
2. No-till Seed Drill for Native Grass Plantings
3. Sod Scalper for Longleaf Pine Establishment



Pineville Office **318-487-5885**
1995 Shreveport Hwy, Pineville, LA 71360

Hammond Office **985-543-4777**
42371 Phyllis Ann Drive, Hammond, LA 70403

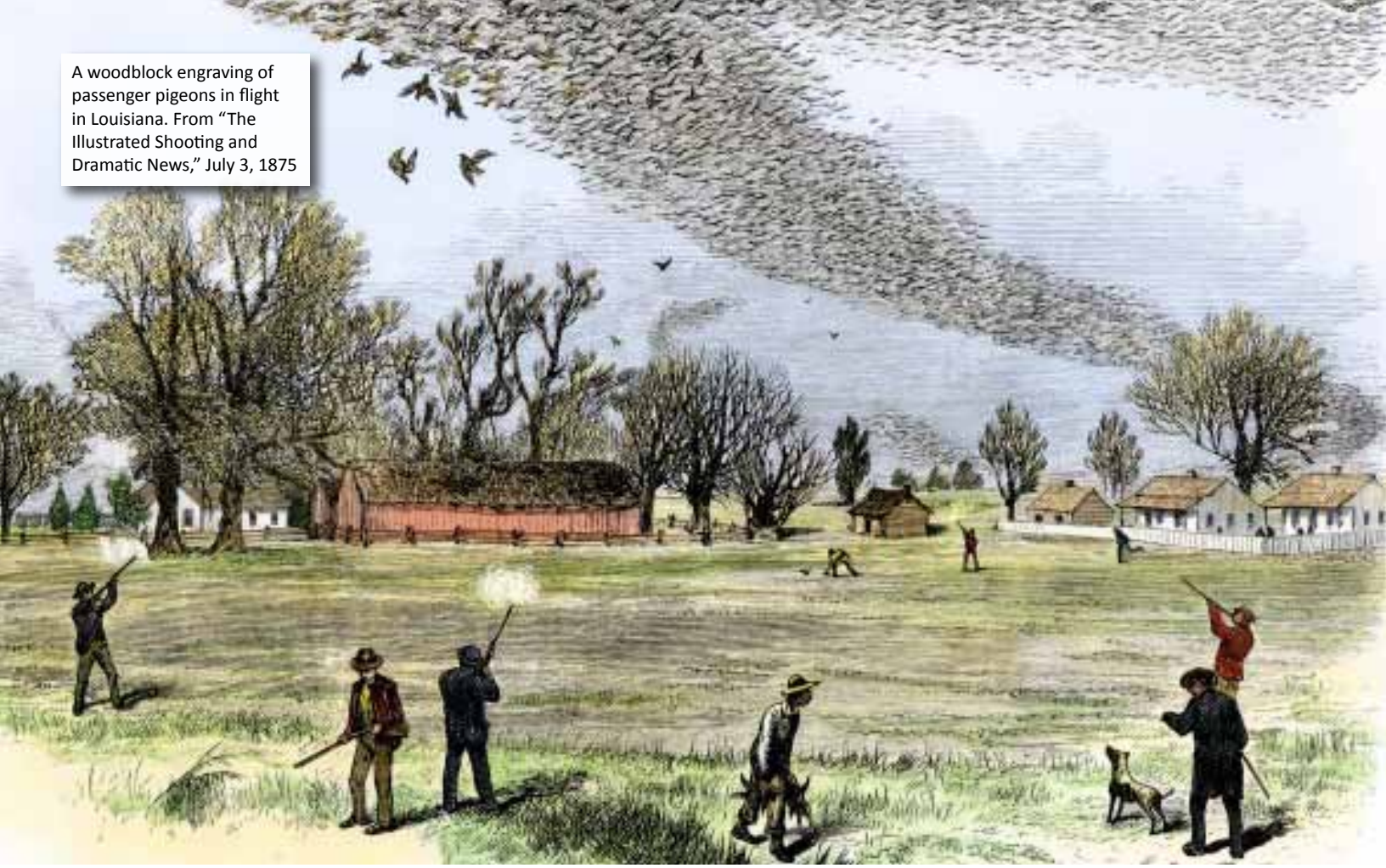
Lake Charles Office **337-491-2575**
1213 North Lakeshore Drive, Lake Charles, LA 70601

Minden Office **318-371-3050**
9961 Highway 80, Minden, LA 71055

Monroe Office **318-343-4044**
368 Centurytel Drive, Monroe, LA 71203

New Iberia Office **337-373-0032**
2415 Darnall Road, New Iberia, LA 70560

Opelousas Office **337-948-0255**
5652 Highway 182, Opelousas, LA 70570



A woodblock engraving of passenger pigeons in flight in Louisiana. From "The Illustrated Shooting and Dramatic News," July 3, 1875

Funding for Wildlife Management in the U.S.

BY TOMMY TUMA, LDWF Director, Habitat Stewardship

If I asked you to name key figures of American conservation, you may be able to name a few. Theodore Roosevelt, John Muir, Gifford Pinchot and Aldo Leopold may immediately come to mind. Many would agree that these men were all very important in early conservation efforts, but more than likely the person that has contributed the most to conservation is someone unknown to you. As a sportsman or sportswoman, Carl Shoemaker is a name you should know.

Before construction of the first transcontinental railroad, wildlife was teeming in the United States. By 1869, as the railroad made its way west, large herds of buffalo, flocks of passenger pigeons, waterfowl, deer, antelope, and even robins had greatly diminished in number. The culprit behind these declines was market hunting. Market hunting, which is unregulated hunting (no seasons or bag limits) for the express purpose of selling animal meat or parts for profit, represented one of the darkest eras of exploitation of wildlife in the United States. In the winter of 1902-1903, for example, a single market hunter sold 120,000 robins for the consumption of patrons who frequented the hotels and restaurants in Texas and adjacent states. The human population in the U.S. was increasing, driving a demand for food. The growing country needed agriculture and wildlife to feed itself. Wildlife and their habitats were decreasing at an alarming rate. Mining was rampant and offered at no charge, the never ending forests were being leveled, fortunes were made and lost easily, all in the name of progress. Because of the sheer size of the U.S., 4 million square miles, people at this time could not fathom the consequences of these actions. It was believed that our natural resources were limitless and inexhaustible. America needed to wake up to the dire need for conservation measures.

It wasn't until the late 1800s to early 1900s that a group of conservation minded thinkers emerged. This group, the Sportsmen of America, carried the flag of conservation for the first 25 years or so in the U.S. By 1918, federal laws brought an end to market hunting. The U.S. government had begun to take control of wildlife in the country, hunting seasons and bag limits were established, and the idea of wildlife refuges was conceived. States established hunting and fishing agencies, but they were too prone to political influence and too poorly staffed and organized to be effective. Science-based wildlife management did not exist at this time. For 30 years, Washington D.C. politicians struggled with how to establish some form of stable funding for con-

servation. Many bills were presented and defeated. It wasn't until a group of conservation minded legislators were elected and pushed forward with an idea that changed U.S. conservation forever. In 1937 the most important piece of legislation affecting wildlife management in the U.S. was passed, the Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Act, commonly referred to as the Pittman-Robertson Act. This Act resulted in a 10 percent federal excise tax on certain sporting goods. In a time when Congress was abolishing excise taxes, a few forward thinking sportsmen and other conservation groups saw an opportunity and proposed the modification of the tax instead of repealing it. Industry wholly supported the idea.

Carl Shoemaker, a former Oregon Fish and Game Commission Director, was the man who drafted the legislation to create the 10 percent manufacturer's excise tax on sporting arms and ammunition "for allocation to the states based on an equitable formula." Carl certainly did not act alone, as Senator Key Pittman of Nevada and Representative A. Willis Robertson of Virginia sponsored the legislation in the U.S. Congress, but only after Robertson added a diversion clause, "….and which shall include a prohibition against the diversion of license fees paid by hunters for any other purpose than the administration of said state fish and game department." These 29 words are probably the most important words ever conceived for the hunters and wildlife enthusiast of America. This meant that no state could receive Pittman-Robertson (PR) dollars if its revenues from hunting licenses were diverted to other uses. The legislation passed with little opposition and was signed into law by President Franklin D. Roosevelt on Sept. 2, 1937.

This legislation created the classic "user pay/user benefit" concept that is still successful today. The funding is only available to the designated agency responsible for the management of the wildlife resources of the state. Here in Louisiana, it is the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries. Pittman-Robertson (PR) funds may be used on projects or activities involving restoration and conservation as long as they deal with wild birds and mammals. Other activities - law enforcement, public relations and revenue-producing activities - don't qualify for PR funding. In 1970, the Pittman-Robertson Act was amended to add receipts from the sale of handguns and again in 1972 to add most archery equipment and components. With these amendments, hunter education, firearm safety, bow hunter education safety, and shooting ranges all became eligible for PR funding. It is important to understand that LDWF is not funded by state tax dollars, but through the sale of hunting licenses and the excise taxes collected through the PR Act. This means that hunters are responsible for the majority of the funding that enables LDWF to manage wildlife and their habitats.

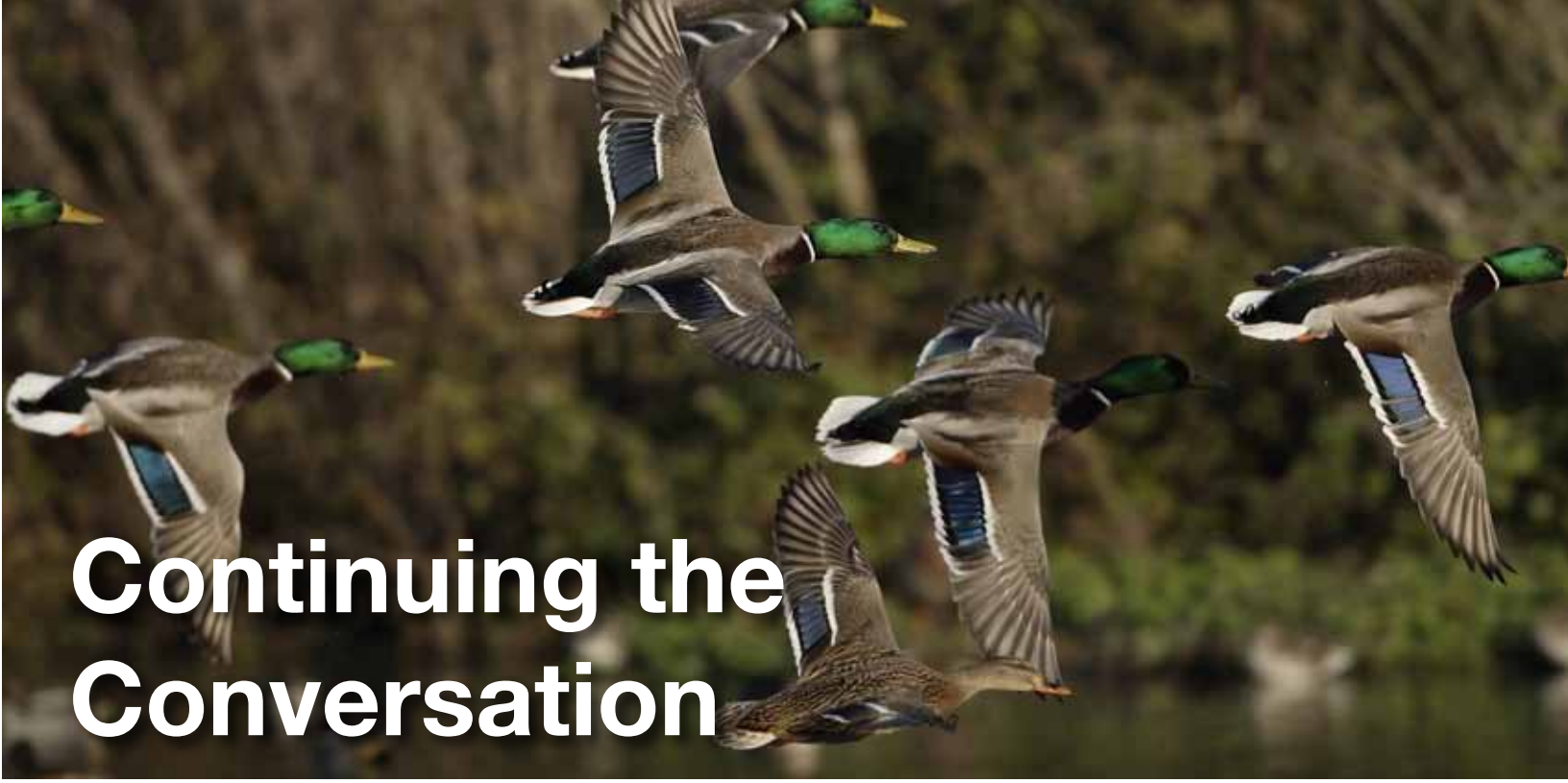
The funds derived from the Pittman-Robertson Act are returned to the states based on the number of hunting licenses sold annually and the size of the state's land and inland waters, both in proportion to other states. The monies are collected by the Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau, U.S. Customs and Border Protection, and the Internal Revenue Service. The monies are deposited into the Wildlife Restoration Account, then distributed to the states, and are administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

States have a matching requirement of 25 percent through non-federal sources, typically through hunting license sales. This means that for every $1 LDWF spends, it gets $3 of PR match, not to exceed its annual apportionment. The beauty of this partnership is LDWF chooses where and how the money is spent. Internally, LDWF utilizes PR funds within the Office of Wildlife to manage native wildlife populations and their habitats, provide recreational opportunities, conduct research projects directly related to wildlife and their habitats, and purchase land for wildlife restoration purposes.

So why the history lesson? Because it's important for hunters to realize that while they may not be the original pioneers of conservation, through the PR program they have contributed the majority of funding for wildlife conservation in the U.S. The PR Act is the single most successful conservation program in history. As of 2014, PR Funds have contributed over $8 billion to conservation projects in the U.S. Although PR is funded solely by firearm users and archery enthusiasts, the benefits are enjoyed by many who don't hunt, such as bird watchers, nature viewers, photographers, wildlife artists, and many other outdoor recreationists.

Without the passage of the PR act of 1937, the hunting opportunities we have today would likely not be present. The hunters and wildlife enthusiasts of today are forever indebted to Carl Shoemaker, A. Willis Robertson, Key Pittman and the other legislators that 78 years ago had the forethought to ensure that future generations would enjoy wildlife for generations to come. So the next time you purchase a hunting license, feel free to call yourself a true conservationist.

Market hunting of waterfowl.
Photo courtesy of USFWS



Continuing the Conversation

Evolving Methods for Louisiana Waterfowl Hunter-Opinion Surveys

BY LARRY REYNOLDS, LDWF Waterfowl Section
DR. LUKE LABORDE, LSU School of Renewable Natural Resources

"You just don't listen to hunters!"

We can only guess how many times we've heard that criticism of waterfowl managers over the last 30 years. It's not true, of course. We were duck hunters long before we became waterfowl biologists, our families and friends included duck hunters, we gathered with duck hunters at public hunting areas, private hunting clubs, fund-raising banquets, and public meetings, and we still do. We've talked for decades, we talk now and we listen.

But are those conversations sufficient for making hunting-regulation decisions? According to recent estimates, Louisiana has over 100,000 active waterfowl hunters. Are conversations with maybe one or two hundred of them representative of the entire population of duck hunters, or do we need to greatly expand the discussion? More fundamentally, why is hunter-opinion even a consideration when hunting regulations should be based on sound biological data?

WHY IS HUNTER OPINION IMPORTANT?

That may sound like a stupid question, but many biologists honestly believe they work for the "resource," i.e. the birds and their habitat. In fact, we work for people who value the use and stewardship of that resource. For ducks and geese, hunters have initiated conservation actions and provided funding for them along with demanding use of those birds through biologically justified hunting seasons. The goal of such conservation actions is to sustain bird populations and hunting opportunities long-term. This linkage between hunters, habitat conservation and waterfowl populations is so evident that the North American Waterfowl Management Plan was revised in 2012 to explicitly include hunters as an objective. The revision puts greater emphasis on the growing the number of hunters and other citizens who enjoy and support waterfowl and wetland conservation, compared to past objectives of maintaining waterfowl populations and the habitat to support them. The number of waterfowl hunters has declined nationwide since the early-2000s despite relatively long seasons and large bag limits each year. Consequently, knowledge of hunter opinions, satisfaction and preference for habitat management or hunting regulations may be key to reversing that trend.

The process of setting waterfowl hunting regulations is not solely biological, and we often have choices. Within limits set by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, we can choose the number/boundaries of hunting zones, splits in the hunting season, season dates, and sometimes we have options for season length and bag-limits of particular species. The biological consequence of those choices is often not definitive, and hunter preference plays a larger role in those decisions. With those considerations and many other questions in mind, LDWF and LSU have worked together since 2005 to collect, analyze and apply hunter-opinion information to both advance human-dimensions research and inform waterfowl harvest management decisions.

SURVEY METHODOLOGIES, RESPONSE RATES AND COMPARATIVE DATA

Dr. Craig Miller, now at the Illinois Natural History Survey, began this conversation with Louisiana waterfowl hunters in 2005 when he was a wildlife professor in the LSU School of Renewable Natural Resources and conducted a survey titled "Hunter Attitudes Toward Duck Season in Louisiana." We have continued that conversation with the 2010 and 2015 Waterfowl Hunter Opinion

Surveys and intend to conduct similar surveys every five years into the future. Smaller, more targeted surveys were conducted in 2012 and 2013 when LDWF was considering the first change in waterfowl hunting zones since 1975. Our goal for these surveys is to gather information representative of the entire population of waterfowl hunters in Louisiana to track hunter participation, harvest and satisfaction with the hunting experience in Louisiana. This information is also used to inform decisions on hunting regulations, such as zones and splits which can also change every five years, wildlife management area (WMA) management, or other policy issues.

Every hunter should be eligible to be selected to participate in the survey such that a random sample of those hunters will provide representative data. Unfortunately, LDWF does not have a unique license that all waterfowl hunters must purchase, so we start with the Harvest Information System (HIP) database to identify as many duck and goose hunters as possible. All migratory bird hunters must register with HIP, and they are asked questions regarding their prior year's harvest. Using hunting licenses purchased and answers to registration questions in the HIP database, we are able to construct a list of known waterfowl hunters, which for our 2015 survey included nearly 95,000. From that list a randomly-selected sample of hunters are contacted via U.S. mail. They are sent a post-card notifying them that they have been selected, and then a six-page survey with questions about themselves, their hunting activity, their preferences for specified hunting regulations or management options, and the opportunity to comment on anything else they choose along with a postage-paid return envelope. At regular intervals, the first survey is followed by a reminder post-card and a second survey in an attempt to maximize the response rate. In 2005, 6,500 selected hunters were mailed surveys, and 2,916 responses were received for a 56 percent response rate after accounting for undeliverable addresses.

In 2010, we conducted a traditional mail-out survey but added an open-Web mode so that every interested waterfowl hunter could participate. Surveys were sent to 2,500 randomly-selected hunters, and then an identical survey was Web-enabled, hosted on the LDWF website, and publicized to gather information from non-selected hunters. Being aware that internet based surveys are very likely biased toward more dedicated hunters we felt that the low cost, benefits of allowing all hunters to participate, and added confidence when responses to particular questions were the same between the two survey modes warranted including the open-Web component. We mailed surveys and follow-ups to 2,500 selected hunters, received 802 responses for a 34 percent adjusted response rate, and got 969 usable surveys from the open-Web mode. These sample sizes generated a 95 percent statistical confidence interval of +/- 4 percent.

Data analyses comparing the responses from those two survey modes in 2010 have changed the way we think about Web-based hunter opinion surveys. The samples of hunters were indeed different (*Figure 1*). Respondents to the open-Web survey hunted more, harvested more waterfowl, and were clearly more dedicated waterfowl hunters than were respondents to the mail-out survey. They therefore would not be a representative sample to estimate hunting activity or harvest. However, for virtually all satisfaction, attitude or preference questions, the responses from the two survey modes were very similar (*Figures 2 and 3*).

In 2012, a single-mailing of surveys to 6,500 randomly-selected hunters was conducted to evaluate options for expanding the number of waterfowl hunting zones as allowed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Without the reminder post-cards and additional surveys, we received 1,096 responses for only a 17

FIGURE 1. 2010 Waterfowl Hunter Survey respondent gender, hunting activity and harvest.

MAIL-OUT VS. OPEN-WEB RESPONDENTS - GENDER & AVIDITY

CATEGORY	MAIL-OUT	OPEN-WEB
Male	90%	99%
Female	10%	1%
Average Number of Days Hunted (Season)	12.5	19
Average Harvest of Ducks (Season)	27	50.6
Average Harvest of Geese (Season)	2	3.8
Average Harvest per Day (Ducks & Geese)	2.3	2.9
Waterfowling is one of the most important recreational activities	65%	84%

FIGURE 2. 2012 Waterfowl Hunter Survey respondent % who hunted WMAs and satisfaction.

Please rate your overall satisfaction with your experience hunting on a LDWF wildlife management area (WMA)

CATEGORY	MAIL-OUT	OPEN-WEB
Very Satisfied	17%	21%
Satisfied	49%	52%
Not Sure	15%	12%
Dissatisfied	12%	11%
Very Dissatisfied	7%	4%
% of respondents hunting on a WMA	*23%*	*39%*

FIGURE 3. 2010 Waterfowl Hunter Survey respondent agreement with noon shooting-hours closure.

Please indicate wether you support or oppose the following actions: *Ending waterfowl shooting hours at noon each day*

CATEGORY	MAIL-OUT	OPEN-WEB
Strongly Oppose	35%	34%
Oppose	23%	22%
Neutral	15%	12%
Support	16%	15%
Strongly Support	11%	17%

percent adjusted response rate. The Web-enabled survey provided 1,286 usable responses. As in 2010, the open-Web respondents were more avid waterfowl hunters, but responses to attitude and preferences questions were nearly identical between the mail-out and open-Web surveys.

The 2013 Waterfowl Hunter-Opinion Survey was conducted primarily to evaluate the satisfaction with the new three-zone hunting configuration implemented in the fall of 2012, and to evaluate hunter preferences for potential season dates in each zone. Two new components were added: 1.) entry into three drawings for a guided hunt at White Lake WCA, a Remington 877 shotgun, and a Gore-Tex Waterfowl Parka as incentive to increase lagging survey response rates, and 2.) a third survey mode called an Internet Panel consisting of post-cards mailed to randomly-selected hunters asking them to take the survey on a restricted website. Despite the incentives and follow-up post-cards and surveys, we received only 646 responses for the mail-out survey and 149 for the Internet Panel for adjusted response rates of only 26 percent and 7 percent, respectively. However, responses to the open-Web survey increased to 1,536. All surveys have costs for personnel, survey development and analysis, but the mode-specific costs for 2013 were estimated at $30,000 for the mail-out, $6,000 for the Internet Panel, and $2,000 for the open-Web to collect and enter data from those survey responses. Clearly, there are important cost considerations, as well as sample bias issues, when designing a hunter-opinion survey.

Just as in the 2010 and 2012 surveys, the open-Web survey respondents in 2013 were more avid hunters than either the mail-out or Internet Panel respondents (*Figure 4*), but the answers to satisfaction and preference questions were remarkably similar (*Figure 5*) especially considering the wide variance in sample size.

CURRENT AND FUTURE SURVEYS

The 2015 Louisiana Waterfowl Hunter Survey had a closing date of June 30. Along with the mail-out, Internet Panel and open-Web surveys previously described, we contacted every hunter in the HIP database of known waterfowl hunters that was not selected for the mail-out or Internet Panel for whom there was an e-mail address, and we asked them to fill out the survey at a specified website. That was nearly 24,000 hunters contacted via e-mail with three follow-ups, as well as 2,500 for each of the mail-out and Internet Panel. At this point we have received just over 400 responses to the mail-out, about 200 to the Internet Panel, over 1,300 to the open-Web, and about 5,300 to the e-mail contacts.

Response rates to traditional mail-out surveys in Louisiana have fallen from 56 percent in 2005, to 34 percent in 2010, to 26 percent in 2013, and appear lower still in 2015. Response rate to the e-mail mode of the 2015 survey is only slightly over 20 percent, but it has generated much higher participation (sample size) of any prior survey, is relatively cheap to conduct, and respondents may be more representative of the entire hunter population than open-Web respondents. Analyses of those data are sure to guide future survey design as well as inform upcoming decisions on hunting regulations and management options.

As our communication tools expand and the use of hunter-preference information increases, better survey methods are required. Although mail-out surveys are currently the most representative and scientifically accepted method, their relatively high cost and remarkable similarity to open-Web surveys in terms of satisfaction, attitude and preference questions will keep us searching for more cost-effective ways to gather hunter-opinion information and continue our conversation with waterfowl hunters.

FIGURE 4. 2013 Waterfowl Hunter Survey respondent demographics, hunting activity and harvest.

COMPARISON OF DEMOGRAPHICS, AVIDITY & SUCCESS

CATEGORY	MAIL-OUT	INTERNET PANEL	OPEN-WEB
Male	94%	90%	98%
Female	6%	10%	2%
Age	44.2	41.3	41.1
Average Number of Days Hunted (Season)	22.1	18.3	31.1
Average Harvest of Ducks (Season)	39.3	40.8	71
Average Harvest of Geese (Season)	5	3.3	7.3
Average Harvest per Day (Ducks & Geese)	2	2.4	2.5

FIGURE 5. 2013 Waterfowl Hunter Survey respondent satisfaction with new hunting zone boundaries.

Please rate your satisfaction with the new Louisiana waterfowl hunting zones

CATEGORY	RANDOM MAIL	INTERNET PANEL	OPEN-WEB
Very Satisfied	12%	14%	15%
Satisfied	58%	54%	53%
Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied	25%	29%	24%
Dissatisfied	3%	2%	5%
Very Dissatisfied	2%	1%	3%

LEFT to RIGHT: LDWF Secretary Robert Barham, Robert "Bob" Love and LWF President Barney Callahan.

Robert Love Receives 2014 Governor's Award for Conservationist of the Year and the Louisiana Ornithological Society George H. Lowery Award

The Louisiana Wildlife Federation's 2014 Governor's Award for Conservationist of the Year was awarded in March 2015 to Robert "Bob" Love, the Coastal and Nongame Resources (CNR) Division Administrator with the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries. In April 2015, Bob was also honored by the Louisiana Ornithological Society with the George H. Lowery Award. The Governor's Award is presented annually to the person or organization deemed to have made the most outstanding contribution toward the protection and wise use of Louisiana's natural resources among nominees submitted by the public. The George H. Lowery Award honors persons who have made a significant contribution to Louisiana birding and/or habitats, or who have had a major, positive influence on ornithology in Louisiana.

In both awards, Bob was recognized for leading the department's biologist and wildlife technician team involved with the reintroduction of the whooping crane to Louisiana.

As CNR Division Administrator, Bob oversees the Alligator Management Program, furbearer management including the Coast-wide Nutria Control Program, Louisiana's Wildlife Action Plan, the Natural and Scenic Rivers Program, the Louisiana Natural Heritage Program, Oil Spill Response and Natural Resource Damage Assessment, plus coastal operations including management of 10 wildlife management areas (WMAs)and refuges, including White Lake Wetlands Conservation Area (WCA) in Vermilion Parish - located within the same geographic area the cranes had originally occupied and thrived.

Bob initially secured approval for the whooping crane reintroduction project by proposing a funding model which utilizes privately raised funds. Bob has also directed fundraising to gather resources, additional to state, federal and private dollars, to make the project financially stable during the formative years. Those fund raising efforts have brought in $1.5 million since 2011.

Bob also led efforts to define the Louisiana whooping cranes as a non-essential, experimental population with the United States Department of Interior. This designation means the population is treated similar to a threatened, rather than endangered, species. This allows greater flexibility in management and research, as well as much greater public acceptance of endangered species restoration as these birds will not impact the normal lifestyle and activities on the Louisiana landscape.

Bob began his career in 1981 as a wildlife specialist in the Baton Rouge District VII office for the Wildlife Division. Early in his career he worked with many game species, nuisance wildlife species, and species of special concern, including alligators. After working on WMAs throughout the Florida Parishes of southeast Louisiana, Bob was promoted through the biologist ranks to serve as the Land Acquisition Program Manager for nine years. During this time, Bob negotiated acquisition of more than 80,000 acres of various landholdings to be incorporated into LDWF's WMA and Refuge system. He served 18 years in the Wildlife Division before his promotion to Assistant Administrator and eventually Administrator of the Coastal and Nongame Resources Division, positions he has held for the past 16 years.

Bob received his undergraduate degree in biology from Monmouth College in Monmouth, Ill., in 1975. He received his master's degree in wildlife management in 1981 from Louisiana State University. His master's degree thesis focused on the food habits of nutria in brackish marshes, with field work on the State Wildlife Refuge in Vermilion Parish.

Over his career, Bob has been involved in various wildlife groups including the Wild Turkey Federation, Ducks Unlimited, LSU Forestry, Wildlife and Fisheries Alumni Association, The Wildlife Society, LA Professional Biologists Association and others. He was also honored recently with the Acadiana Sportsmen's League 2013 Emeritus Award.

Bodcau Wildlife Management Area

BY JARROD HUGHES,
LDWF WMA Field Biologist

The Office of Wildlife of the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF) currently manages over 1.1 million acres in its Wildlife Management Area (WMA) Program. The WMA Program's mission is to provide wise stewardship of the state's wildlife and habitats, to maintain biodiversity, including plant and animal species of special concern, and to provide outdoor opportunities for present and future generations to engender a greater appreciation of the natural environment. Habitats within these lands harbor and help conserve a multitude of endangered species, species of concern, and the more common game species. Recreational opportunities range from hunting and fishing, to canoeing, hiking, camping, bird watching and berry picking. The habitats found on WMAs include upland pine/hardwood, cypress tupelo, pine savanna, bottomland hardwood, brackish marsh, and the list goes on with many globally rare habitat types and plant communities as well. Each issue of the Louisiana Wildlife Insider will feature a different WMA highlighting the WMA's history, unique features, and recreational opportunities.

Bodcau WMA consists of approximately 33,766 acres located in Bossier and Webster parishes. Bodcau derives its name from the major bayou that bisects it from its northernmost point at the Arkansas-Louisiana state line to its southernmost tip nearly 30 miles to the south. The WMA is located approximately 17 miles northeast of Bossier City. Bodcau WMA is owned by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE). The area is long and narrow with an average width of one and one-half miles. In the late 1940s, a dam was constructed as a flood control project to protect 43,000 acres of alluvial bottomlands downstream from flooding, including Barksdale Air Force Base. In 1954 efforts began between USACE and LDWF to formulate a license agreement to manage the wildlife and fisheries resources for public use. The agreement was finalized in 1955 and management began by LDWF.

The WMA contains a wide array of wildlife habitats, ranging from cypress swamps to upland pine to hardwood forests, interspersed with grasslands and open fields. Many unique species of grasses and forbs that are typically found in states west of Louisiana can be found growing in the grassland areas. There are numerous seasonally flooded sloughs, beaver ponds and large areas of bottomland hardwood forests. One unique feature of much of the area is that the bottomland forests rapidly merge with the upland forests on a series of ridges that extend into the bottomland areas.

Dominant tree species in the bottomland forests include cow, overcup, water and willow oaks, along with bald cypress. Shortleaf and loblolly pine, cherrybark, red and white oaks, sweetgum and elm trees dominate upland forests. Understory species in the bottomland area include poison ivy, honeysuckle, rattan, buttonbush and swamp privet. Upland understory species include blackberry, honeysuckle, poison ivy, beautyberry and greenbriar.

Management activities conducted every year by USACE and LDWF include prescribed burning, timber management, wildlife surveys, trapping, and educational workshops. Habitat projects such as prescribed burning, tree planting and native warm season grass plantings are conducted by our agencies and partnerships with non-governmental organizations such as Quality Deer Management Association and National Wild Turkey Federation.

Game species available for hunting are deer, squirrel, rabbit, turkey, quail, woodcock, dove and waterfowl. Bodcau WMA hunting seasons are generally the same as that of the surrounding parish seasons, except for deer and turkey which are shorter. Furbearing animals such as raccoon, mink, otter, beaver, opossum, bobcat and coyote are all abundant on Bodcau WMA. Trapping is allowed by licensed trappers during the state season. Nongame species such as bald eagles, great blue herons, several species of hawks, and barred, great horned and screech owls are common. Yellow, black and white, yellow-throated, magnolia, prairie and yellow-rumped warblers are regularly seen on the area. Numerous species of reptiles, amphibians and insects can be seen on the area as well.

According to LDWF records, in 1954, 16 deer were released on Bodcau WMA. Deer collections and browse surveys conducted every several years show moderate to high deer herd levels with excellent reproduction and overall balanced sex and age ratios. Habitat diversity created by timber harvests, prescribed burning and natural disasters such as tornadoes support this high deer population on the WMA. User data reveals more than 200 deer are harvested each year with over 2,000 reported hunter efforts. Reproductive data collected indicates that the rut starts in early November and peaks by mid-month. Either-sex firearms season opens the last Saturday of October and ends the first Sunday in December, which allows hunting during the peak rutting period. Either-sex harvest is allowed for the duration of the firearm season.

The turkey population on Bodcau WMA is moderate. During the spring 2015 season, 18 turkeys were harvested with 254 hunter efforts. Bodcau WMA is in Area B turkey zone with the general season opening the same as private lands but closing earlier, with 16-17 days available to hunt. Two special youth hunts are also available: a lottery hunt preceding and an open hunt following the general season. Mixed mature pine-hardwood, bottomland, wildlife openings, and open grassland fields provide excellent turkey habitat year-round. These habitat types are essential during certain times of the year, especially during nesting and brooding periods.

Small game hunting generates over 3,000 user efforts each year. Excellent squirrel and rabbit hunting can be found throughout the bottomland-mixed pine-hardwood stands, fields and shrub thickets in the Whittington field area. Each year lanes are mowed in the Whittington field area to provide rabbit hunters with places to stand and have a chance to harvest rabbits as they are being pursued by beagles. The Bodcau WMA either-sex deer firearms season closes the first Sunday in December to provide opportunity for small game hunting through the months of December to February, including special seasons allowing dogs for pursuit of small game. Approximately 20 acres of millet, sunflower and sorghum are planted annually to provide dove hunting opportunities. Waterfowl hunting is a major activity. The primary waterfowl hunting area is a 700-acre greentree reservoir that is flooded annually. Hunters access the greentree by pirogue and wading into shallow oak flats. Bayou Bodcau, small beaver ponds and Ivan Lake offer good waterfowl hunting as well. Hunters harvest over 300 birds a year. Mallard, wood duck, gadwall, teal and ringed-neck ducks are the most commonly harvested species.

Bodcau WMA offers many outdoors oriented activities for users, including fishing, camping, hiking, horseback riding, bird watching, boating, and shooting. LDWF operates a public shooting range on Bodcau WMA open Friday through Sunday. Shooting accommodations include rifle, pistol, shotgun and archery. The rifle range is up to 200 yards and the pistol range is set at 25 yards. Ivan Lake is a 520-acre reservoir located in the WMA and recently updated with piers to provide bank access for fishing. The lake was drained to repair a water control structure, then filled and restocked in 2012 with bass, bream, catfish and white perch. Primitive camping is allowed in designated areas on the WMA, while the USACE has improved camping in the Tom Merrill Recreation area with electric hookups, showers and restroom facilities. Bodcau WMA is a diverse area with a wide variety of activities for both the consumptive and non-consumptive user year round.

For more information concerning Bodcau Wildlife Management Area contact the Minden Field office at (318) 371-3050 or refer to the LDWF website at *www.wlf.la.gov.* You may also contact US Army Corps of Engineers at (318) 949-1804.

RIGHT: Bodcau gobbler taken in recent controlled burn area.
BELOW: Controlled burn on Bodcau WMA.

VOLUNTEER PROFILE

Roger Crawley

Roger Crawley has volunteered to assist with various LDWF programs for 25 years. In addition to being a long-time volunteer Hunter Education Instructor, Roger generously donates his time to help with many other LDWF events, such as Becoming an Outdoors Woman (BOW) , Beyond BOW deer hunts, Kiroli Park fishing clinic, Archery in LA Schools, and the Youth Hunter Education Challenge.

When asked why he volunteers, Roger offered, "I like teaching people how to enjoy the great outdoors. Our state has so much to offer. We are truly blessed to live in the real Sportsman's Paradise. I get a lot of satisfaction out of helping people learn to shoot a firearm, shoot a bow or cast a bait. I just like helping people learn."

Roger is an outstanding volunteer and an important contributor to LDWF education programs. We are fortunate to have volunteers like Roger who unselfishly give of their time and are willing to share their knowledge and passion for the outdoors with others. If you would like to become a volunteer in the LDWF Hunter Education or Aquatic Education Programs, contact Eric Shanks at 225-765-2355 or eshanks@wlf.la.gov.

FEATURED BIOLOGISTS

Jeb Linscombe

Biologist Manager, Alligator Program

Jeb earned his B.S. degree in Environmental and Renewable Resources from the University of Southwestern Louisiana in Lafayette and a Master's Degree in Wildlife Management from Louisiana State University. For his master's degree, Jeb investigated the effects of high levels of airboat and other traffic associated with seismic activities on nesting bald eagles in Louisiana's coastal wetlands. Jeb's field work proved to be an invaluable experience and gave him a unique perspective of the relationship between wildlife management and industry. In September 1999, Jeb was hired by LDWF as a Waterfowl Biologist at Rockefeller Wildlife Refuge. Over the next decade Jeb was involved with monitoring waterfowl populations through aerial surveys, and was responsible for leading LDWF's mottled duck banding program. Jeb also represented LDWF by serving on the Webless Committee of the Mississippi Flyway Council, as Co-Chair of the Gulf Coast Joint Venture Board (GCJV) on the Chenier Plain Initiative Team, Louisiana Waterfowl Project South, and was LDWF's official GCJV board member. Jeb took great pride in assisting the waterfowl community and private landowners with wetland and waterfowl habitat management plans and recommendations. In addition to his waterfowl duties, Jeb was also involved with the management and monitoring of Rockefeller Refuge's 75,000-acre wetland complex. Jeb was active in many different aerial monitoring surveys including nesting bald eagles, nesting brown pelicans, mottled duck breeding bird surveys, Coast-wide Nutria Control Program damage survey, and the Louisiana Coastal Vegetation Type Survey. At Rockefeller Refuge, Jeb served as a mentor and advisor to numerous graduate students working on research projects addressing king and clapper rail morphology and migration, mottled duck and gadwall habitat usage, various wetland ecology projects, and the evaluation of wetland potential for whooping crane reintroduction.

Jeb is currently a Biologist Manager with LDWF's Alligator Management Program. He is responsible for coordinating field projects and monitoring systems necessary for the proper management of Louisiana's alligator population. Jeb's primary duties include conducting the annual Coast-wide Alligator Nest Survey and collecting critical alligator population data by parish, region, land ownership and habitat types. Jeb is responsible for using these data to determine alligator habitat quality and to establish annual alligator tag quotas for the wild harvest. He is also responsible for oversight of the collection of detailed scientific data regarding the egg collection and release program, as well as data from alligators captured in the wild harvest. These data are essential for development of the annual "no detriment" finding for the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, a critical requirement of Louisiana's alligator harvest. Jeb makes technical recommendations and provides guidance to landowners, land managers, farmers and trappers regarding wild alligators and alligator egg harvests. He is directly responsible for coordinating the LDWF team that conducts the issuance of approximately 39,000 wild harvest tags and over 3,000 licenses annually. Jeb also administers the statewide Nuisance Alligator Program which utilizes approximately 60 nuisance alligator hunters across the state to handle these conflict issues in a safe manner for the public.

WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT CALENDAR OF EVENTS

	JANUARY	FEBRUARY	MARCH	APRIL	MAY
GENERAL	Dormant season prescribe burn.** Invasive plant control. Take soil samples for food plot preparation.		Growing season prescribe burn, invasive plant control, soil tests, prune and fertilize fruit/mast trees.	Apply herbicide to longleaf stands if necessary, growing season prescribe burn, invasive plant control, fertilize native vegetation.	Plant warm-season food plots*, perform maintenance of fire breaks, growing season prescribe burn, invasive plant control.
DOVES					
DEER	Collect harvest data.	Post-season camera survey before antlers are cast.*** Turn in DMAP records to LDWF.		Browse survey. Work on summer food plots. Fertilize natural deer browse.	
DUCKS/ MOIST-SOIL UNITS		Install new wood duck boxes and clean out existing boxes. Early draw down for moist soil units.	Begin slowly drawing down moist soil units monitor wood duck nest boxes.	Moist-soil plant management/disturbance.	
HOGS	Trap hogs****		Trap hogs		
QUAIL	Prescribe burn/fallow disk.			As needed prescribe burn woody brush areas/avoid mowing-burning all potential nesting areas (2 yr. old native grass areas).	
RABBITS	As needed prescribe burn/disk/mow transition zones.			Escape cover can be created any time during the year as needed.	
SONGBIRDS		Install new bird houses and clean out existing boxes.	Regularly clean bird feeders to reduce disease transfer, prevent nonnative, invasive birds from utilizing bird houses.		
SQUIRRELS					
TURKEY	Prescribe burn/fallow disk/mow for poult habitat.		Listen to gobbling activity prior to hunting season fallow disk/mow for poult habitat growing season burning.	Plant chufa. Growing season burning as needed to improve thick woody brush areas - avoid mowing potential nesting areas.	
WOODCOCK	Future diurnal habitat can be created any time during the year as needed using clearcuts, shelterwood, group selection.				

*always remember that planting food plots is secondary to natural habitat management; food plots benefit several species including deer, turkeys, quail, and non-game species.
**prescribed burning is beneficial to several species including turkey and quail by providing more open habitat for easy movement through the landscape, grasses and forbs for nesting, food,
***pre-season camera survey more informative/important than post-season camera survey by visualizing buck:doe and doe:fawn ratios and aiding in harvest decisions.
****increase hog trapping effort prior to increases in food availability

Eric Shanks

Biologist Program Manager, Hunter and Aquatic Education Program

Eric's career in wildlife began as a laborer on a 500-acre private wildlife management area while still in college. In the spring of 2000, he received his B.S. degree in Wildlife Management from Louisiana State University. After a short stint in private Environmental Services, Eric started his professional career with LDWF as a Biologist 1 with the Inland Fisheries Division in the Lake Charles Field Office. He was responsible for collecting, analyzing and reporting field data on freshwater sport fish in Southwest Louisiana. In 2003, Eric was promoted to Biologist Supervisor, assuming additional duties in leading the District 5 aquatic spray crews in efforts to control invasive aquatic plants on public waterways. During this time, he also served on the American Fisheries Society - Alligator Gar Technical Committee, as well as assisting in research and restoration efforts of the endangered pallid sturgeon (*Scaphirhyncus albus*) and the paddlefish (*Polyodon spathula*), a species of concern in Louisiana. Eric was promoted to Biologist Manager of Inland Fisheries District 5 in 2010, and was responsible for fisheries management, aquatic weed control and public relations for roughly 150,000 acres of freshwater habitat in Southwest Louisiana.

Eric joined the Wildlife Division as Program Manager of the Hunter Education Section in the spring of this year. His new duties focus on programmatic administration of Hunter Education, Aquatic Education and Archery in Louisiana Schools, as well as oversight of LDWF public shooting ranges. The things he enjoys most about his new job are working with the dedicated LDWF education staff and volunteers, and the opportunity to introduce youths and adults to hunting and fishing in Louisiana. Annually, through the efforts of Eric and his staff, with enormous help from volunteers, approximately 16,000 students are taught how to be safe and ethical hunters. Additionally, some 7,000 children are introduced to fishing and conservation principles annually, and another 22,000 youths are involved in LDWF's archery program.

Eric has spent almost 15 years as a dedicated LDWF public servant. He tremendously enjoys sharing his passion for hunting, fishing and the outdoors and wild places of Louisiana, evident not only through his leadership at work but also as he spends his free time hunting, fishing and kayaking with his wife and three children in Southwest Louisiana.

JUNE	JULY	AUGUST	SEPTEMBER	OCTOBER	NOVEMBER	DECEMBER
Growing season prescribe burn. Invasive plant control.		Invasive plant control. Bushog/mow roads, fields.	Mast survey. Plant cool-season food plots.* Invasive plant control.	Invasive plant control.		Dormant season prescribe burn.** Invasive plant control.
Plant brown-top millet for first season dove fields.		Manipulate dove fields for hunting plant brown-top millet for second season dove fields.				
Provide mineral supplements.		Apply for DMAP.	Pre-season camera survey.*** Begin deer stand repairs and prep for hunting season	Pre-season camera survey.***	Collect harvest data.	
Moist-soil plant management/disturbance.		Begin partial flooding for teal, begin duck blind repairs and prep for hunting season.	Manipulate moist soil if needed; mow, disc, burn, plow, herbicide.	Start main flooding of moist soil units.		
	Trap hogs****			Trap hogs		
				Fallow disk borders 50 - 100' wide around fall deer plots to improve summer quail nesting-feeding habitat.		
Escape cover can be created any time during the year as needed.				Disk near cover to improve feeding habitat.		
Regularly clean bird feeders to reduce disease transfer, prevent nonnative, invasive birds from utilizing bird houses.					Install new bird houses and clean out existing boxes.	
			Take a youth hunting during special WMA youth squirrel hunts.	Install squirrel nest boxes.		
Plant chufa.				Plant clover for spring plots.		
Future diurnal habitat can be created any time durin the year as needed using clearcuts, shelterwood, group selection.				Bushhog to a height of 12-18 inches and/or burn openings managed for nocturnal habitat.		

and summer bedding cover for deer, etc.

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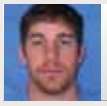

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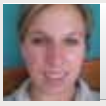

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HABITAT IS THE POINT

BY JASON OLSZAK Biologist

Shallow water areas, or moist-soil units, are usually managed to promote annual forbs and grasses due to the abundance of seeds they produce. One such genus of these grasses is *Echinochloa*. Commonly known as barnyardgrass, cockspur grass, wild millet, or Japanese millet, *Echinochloa* species are among the most favored grasses by wintering waterfowl because they are capable of producing large quantities of seed, up to 2,000 pounds of seed per acre. In Louisiana, *Echinochloa* germination is tied to soil temperature and moisture. Some species thrive when water is drawn off the site rapidly, whereas other species become established with a slower drawdown. For best results, soil moisture must be maintained for growing plants. If you need help with management of shallow water areas, contact Jason Olszak at 337-948-0255 or jolszak@wlf.la.gov, or the LDWF Private Lands biologist in your area.

Walter's Millet

Barnyardgrass

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Presorted
Standard
U.S. Postage
PAID
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Permit No.

PRIVATE LANDS PROGRAM FAQ

WHAT DOES THE PRIVATE LANDS PROGRAM OFFER?

The Private Lands Program is a service of the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries. It is designed to help private landowners accomplish their wildlife conservation goals. After listening to the landowner's goals and evaluating current habitat conditions, professional biologists will formulate a written plan of action. The plans include wildlife management recommendations designed to improve habitat conditions for species of landowner interest and to help manage native plant communities. Plans are tailored to meet landowner's goals and can incorporate other objectives such as farming, timber revenue, and aesthetics. The Private Lands Program is landowner priority directed, flexible, and can assist in connecting with other programs that will contribute to the achievement of the owner's goals. Contact your local Private Lands Program biologist and find out how they can assist in achieving your wildlife management goals.

HOW DO I GET TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE?

Easy! Simply call the nearest Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries office (see map on page 9).

HOW MUCH DO SERVICES OF THE PROGRAM COST?

Assistance from LDWF biologists and a written plan are provided at no charge. The actual implementation of the wildlife management plan is the responsibility of the landowner. However, many management practices can be "cost shared" through other programs, which the LDWF wildlife biologist will review with the landowner or manager.

IS THE SERVICE COMPATIBLE WITH EXISTING PROGRAMS?

Absolutely! The purpose of the Private Lands Program is to assist landowners in achieving their conservation objectives. Through the program, landowners are easily enrolled into existing programs such as the Deer Management Assistance Program (DMAP), Forest Stewardship Program, or USDA programs such as the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP) and Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). The LDWF biologist will be your "one stop" source for information on all these programs.

ARE YOU CURRENTLY WORKING WITH A PROFESSIONAL OR ARE YOU ENROLLED IN A LAND MANAGEMENT PROGRAM?

If yes, please inform your LDWF biologist. Biologists wish to maintain good working relationships with other land management professionals such as consultant foresters and personnel from other state and federal agencies. Each are working to help you achieve your goals.

Prescribed burning trailer available for rent from the LDWF Private Lands Program.

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