

ANR CEA Wildlife Newsletter | March 2019

WHATIZIT?

No picture this month. A hunter in South Texas had two large birds – maybe even eagle-sized – come to check out his predator call. The birds were a dark color, and he noticed white near the rump. He also remembers a bright yellow beak and feet. Please identify this species!

News

- This spring is predicted to be [good for turkey hunting](#). South Zone general season is open now and North Zone general season opens March 30.
 - You can find [specific regulations](#) for your county in the TPWD Outdoor Annual.
 - All harvest of eastern turkeys must be reported electronically within 24 hours of harvest. This can be done via the “TPWD My Texas Hunt Harvest” app or [online](#) (see “Report Your Eastern Turkey” at top of page).
 - Hunters harvesting Rio Grande turkeys can do so with air guns starting this season. Details on [legal means of take](#) are also in the Outdoor Annual.
 - There are several Extension publications that provide information for [turkey management](#).
- Time to think about summer camps! While the application period has closed for Texas Brigades, the Texas Chapter of The Wildlife Society’s program, [Wildlife Conservation Camp](#), is accepting applications until May 1.
- The “Fact Check” series hosted by Dimmit and Frio counties will be held again this summer and is available to broadcast to any interested county! If you are interested in tuning in, whether to host a program or to use as an agent training, please email Isabel Hernandez (isabel.hernandez@ag.tamu.edu). This year we are expanding beyond wildlife to include some other relevant topics:
 - June 7: Controlling and managing invasive plants (Dr. Bob Lyons)
 - June 28: Understanding the ecology of non-native species (Dr. Maureen Frank)
 - July 12: Understanding why some species invade (Dr. Maureen Frank)
 - August 2: Landowner liability and leases (Tiffany Dowell Lashmet, J.D.)
- The [Statewide Quail Symposium](#) will be held August 14-16 in Abilene. Early registration is just \$50 and this conference is geared toward landowners, managers, hunters, and all other quail enthusiasts. The first day will feature a ranch tour and hands-on lessons about quail habitat.
- There is a new Extension publication on snake identification, “[Identifying Venomous and Nonvenomous Snakes in Texas](#).” Electronic download is free, printed copies will be available for purchase through the AgriLife bookstore.

Bird Feeders

A common springtime activity, especially as migration begins, is putting out bird feeders. But did you know there is a right way and a wrong way to feed birds? See [this Audubon article](#) for more information; here are three questions to ask before putting up a feeder:

1. Is the species that you want to attract at risk?
You can check [here](#) or [here](#). If the answer is yes, don't feed. While it may seem counterintuitive, feeding species that are at risk is likely to do more harm than good by altering their foraging behaviors, bringing them into close contact with humans, and increasing their vulnerability to dangers such as window strikes and predators.
2. Is the food appropriate and safely provided?
While feeding bread to ducks and geese may seem harmless, it is not a good source of nutrition and can be detrimental to their health. Backyard bird feeders are beneficial only if used responsibly. If you aren't committed to keeping a feeder clean and safe, it's best not to feed. What's the number one way to provide food for birds? Native plants!!
3. Is feeding this bird likely to change its behavior in harmful ways?
Birds learn to associate food with how they receive it. If you place food in a feeder, you'll probably see certain birds there day after day, because they have learned to associate that spot with food. **Never** feed birds by hand (think gulls at a beach). When birds associate food with people, both people and birds are put at risk.

"Abandoned" Wildlife

Another important springtime reminder is that baby animals are on the way, and as people spend time outside, they are likely to encounter these and other animals. The best thing to do, in most situations, is to leave the animals alone! Especially if the animal is a fawn, it is most likely **not** abandoned. Human interference can create a problem where there was none. If an animal is truly injured, [call a licensed rehabilitator](#).

Preventing Wildlife Damage

The most important step in managing human/wildlife interactions is to prevent animals from becoming a nuisance in the first place. Simple steps around the house can greatly reduce the chance of problems.

- Seal all openings greater than ¼" to prevent mice, rats, squirrels, and bats from gaining entry to buildings.
- Trim all branches at least 6' away from buildings to prevent squirrels from jumping onto the roof.
- Never exclude momma: if you discover a family of raccoons, skunks, etc. living under your porch or in your attic, make sure you get **all** of them out, not just the adult. If babies are trapped inside when you seal a hole, momma will move mountains (read: tear a new hole) to try to get them. If she doesn't succeed, the babies will die.
- Place all trash in cans with tight-fitting lids and don't leave pet food outside. Preventing access to human and pet food is one of the best things you can do to keep wildlife wild.