

Grass Roots

Photo by Jeff Goodwin



PUBLISHED BY THE TEXAS SECTION SOCIETY FOR RANGE MANAGEMENT



*Providing Leadership for the Stewardship of Rangelands
Based on Sound Ecological Principles*



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President's Notes



Bill Pinchak, Ph.D.
President, TSSRM

Odessa 2010 Annual Meeting Opportunities Under the Western Sky: Planning, Persistence and Profitability.

Speakers for the meeting are confirmed and include Dr's. Keith Owens, Brad Wilcox, Jim Ansley, Allan McGinty, Sam Fuhlendorf, Bonnie Warnock, Charles Hart, and Alan Knutson. On Wednesday afternoon, there will be a special session for our young professionals. Dr. Jason Johnson and Dr. Bruce Carpenter will be giving a 2-hour program on strategic planning and financial planning for those who have recently or will soon enter the workforce. In addition, Joe Beach (TPWD), Rodney Hyatt (NRCS), and Scott Durham/Marvin Ensor (AgriLife Extension) will be on hand to discuss their organizations and conduct interviews with the recent grads or soon-to-be grads.

The Section is moving forward in its goal of assuring relevance to professional land managers. The Section is actively involved in promotion ecologically based management of Texas rangelands. The next BOD meeting is scheduled for July 23rd at Mason Mountain WMA, and I hope you take the time to contact Officers, Directors and Committee Chairs with your ideas and thoughts of how to improve TSSRM as your professional society.

Regards,

Bill Pinchak

The Inside Story...

- TSSRM Website Needs YOU !
- Last Call for ORM/ORS Award Nominations
- Texas Section SRM Honor Awards - 2nd Call
- Get Those "Unsung" Heros Involved
- Mesquite
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- TPWD Wildlife Biologist Leaves Legacy
- TSSRM 2010 Photo Contest Rules

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THE WEBSITE NEEDS **YOU!**

TSSRM Is Looking for A Website Coordinator

The website is being updated when updated information is given to the website coordinator, which is then processed and sent for updating. If you would like to take the website coordinator responsibility, please contact the current website coordinator or the TSSRM board.

Texas Section SRM Honor Awards 2nd Call

The TSSRM Awards Committee is currently accepting nominations for the following five award categories:

Outstanding Contribution to Rangeland Management

Outstanding Achievement

Special Recognition

Fellow Award

Outstanding Young Range Professional

Award categories, criteria and nomination format can be found on the TSSRM website: <http://www.rangelands.org/texas/awards.htm>

The deadline to have the nominations into the Awards committee has been extended to:

July 1, 2010 for the Fellow Award, Outstanding Contribution to Rangeland Management Award and the Special Recognition Award, and **August 15, 2010** for the Outstanding Young Range Professional and Outstanding Achievement Award.

You all know deserving folks for these categories. Let's take the time to nominate the leaders of our profession. Submit completed nominations to:

Tim W.Reinke
312 S. Main Rm. 308
Victoria, Texas 77901
tim.reinke@hotmail.com

Upcoming Events

Board of Directors Meeting

July 23, 2010, Mason Mountain WMA

Ranch Diversification Workshop

Mexia, Texas - July 15, 2010

For more info contact Jeff Goodwin at jeff.goodwin@yahoo.com

TSSRM 2010 Annual Meeting

October 13-15, 2010 - Odessa, Texas

TSSRM 2011 Annual Meeting

October - San Angelo, Texas

64th SRM Annual Meeting

February 6-10, 2011 - Billings, Montana



Last Call for ORM/ORS Award Nominations

TSSRM Members,

The Outstanding Rangeland Management Committee would like at this time to announce the “Last Call” for Nominations the Outstanding Rangeland Management (ORM) and the Outstanding Rangeland Stewardship (ORS) Awards.

The purpose of the ORM award is to recognize those who have demonstrated outstanding skill and knowledge in practicing sound management and care of rangeland resources. ***This is a competitive award, and only one will be given each year.*** This award is linked to the ranch. Once a ranch has received the award, it is not eligible to receive it again. If more than one ranch is owned and/or operated by the same person, each ranch is eligible. Nominations shall be made by persons who are well acquainted with the ranching and range management practices of the nominee. Nominations may be made by members of TSSRM or by non-members. All nominations must have concurrence by two members of TSSRM who agree that the nominee is truly deserving of this recognition.

The ORS award is a joint award given by TSSRM and Texas and Southwestern Cattle Raisers Association. The purpose of this award is similar to the ORM award; however, this award recipient **must be a member of TSCRA**. Membership in the TSSRM is desirable but not specifically required. **The ORS Award Winner** will be recognized during the Texas Section Society for Range Management Awards Luncheon during its annual meeting. Award Nominations forms can be found at the Texas Section SRM website under the “Section Awards” tab or can be found at:

ORM Award: http://texas.rangelands.org/awards/TSSRM_ORM_Nomination.pdf

ORS Award: http://texas.rangelands.org/awards/TSSRM_TSCRA_ORSAwardNomination.pdf

Please send complete nominations in by July 15, 2010 to:

Jeff Goodwin

1511 Wordsworth Dr.

Cleburne, Texas 76033

Get Those “Unsung” Heroes Involved!

Nominations will be accepted for Grass Roots Awards this year until July 15th. This is a great opportunity to recognize some of the local “unsung” heroes of range management. Categories for the awards are as follows: Ag Science Teacher, Extension Agent, NRCS, and Friend of TSSRM. Don't miss this opportunity to get someone new involved with TSSRM. Let's seek out those leading professionals who may not be familiar with TSSRM and get them to the annual meeting by recognizing their efforts to better rangelands. For more details on the Grass Roots Awards, check out the nomination form on the TSSRM website. Nominations can be emailed to jason.hohlt@yahoo.com or mailed to Jason Hohlt, 513 E. Tenth St. Bishop, Texas 78343.

Mesquite

By Steve Nelle



Mesquite needs no description to the residents of Texas. It is possibly the single most disliked species of plant in the state and its nasty attributes are well known. It has been called noxious, worthless and insidious. Millions of dollars have been spent trying to eradicate, control, or manage it, but few will claim success in these measures. While much has already been written about why mesquite is such a “bad plant”, this article will focus on some of the positive qualities of mesquite.

First, we must dispel the most common myth about mesquite. Many have falsely proclaimed that mesquite is not a native Texas plant, but was brought up from Mexico with some of the early cattle drives. The facts say otherwise, with an abundance of evidence that mesquite is a true Texas native. The journals of early explorers confirm that mesquite was not

only historically present across much of Texas, but that it was naturally quite abundant in certain regions.

If we can lay aside the myth and emotion about mesquite, and look objectively, we can see that mesquite is actually a valuable plant with many desirable qualities. Mesquite trees have thin, lacy foliage that allows sunlight to penetrate beneath the canopy. This dappled shade provides enough sunlight for other plants to grow, yet still provides the benefit of partial shade. As a result, the soil under mesquite is cooler and usually retains moisture longer, creating favorable growing conditions for other plants.

In addition, the soil beneath mesquite is an enriched soil. Mesquite is a legume, and is able to convert atmospheric nitrogen into soil nitrogen by the activity of bacteria that live on the roots of mesquite. No one can say with certainty how much nitrogen is added to the soil, but some research indicates the contribution is significant. The annual falling of mesquite leaves as well as the growth and decay of other plants of-



ten creates an unusually mellow soil under mesquite with good structure and high organic matter. Some of the more desirable grasses and forbs that grow well in this specialized environment include Texas bluegrass, Texas wintergrass, wildrye, western wheatgrass, southwestern bristlegrass, pigeonberry, Texas night-

shade, sida, and hairy tubetongue, just to name a few.

Stan Reinke, retired NRCS Wildlife Biologist with the NRCS, has documented extremely high infiltration rates beneath mesquite canopies near San Angelo. With the rainfall simulator set on the maximum rainfall rate (over 5 inches per hour), runoff did not occur. The porous soil beneath mesquite absorbed every drop of rain. Just a few feet away in the spaces between mesquite, infiltration rates were much lower, even where the grass cover was good.

Ranchmen are well aware of the high value of mesquite beans as food for livestock and wildlife. Although the mesquite bean crop is not reliable, it comes along with enough regularity to be a saving grace to animals in the harshest part of summer. Mesquite beans are very high in carbohydrates and energy and also provide a substantial amount of protein. All kinds of livestock and many species of wildlife relish (and must certainly appreciate) this bonus during summer when ranges are often devoid of other desirable forage. Nearly every rancher in mesquite country will admit that a good crop of mesquite beans has saved the day on more than one occasion.

Quail hunters who take the time to examine and identify the contents of the crop (the pouch above the breast that holds what the quail has eaten) will verify that quail regularly eat mesquite seed. You may wonder how a quail is able to shuck the individual seed out of the bean pod. The answer probably lies in the cow pie. Cattle consume the sweet, seed-laden beans, digesting the softer parts, but passing out the hard



slick seed in manure. Quail then scratch in the cow pie to find the morsels, gathered and processed by the cow. The lowly tumble bug may even contribute to the seed-finding by breaking apart the pie.

The value of mesquite as cover for deer is often not fully appreciated. Millions of acres of Texas rangeland would not support huntable populations of white-tailed deer if it were not for mesquite. The white-tail is by nature a secretive and reclusive animal. They prefer to stay in or near the protective cover of brush. Mesquite provides more of this kind of cover than any other species of brush in Texas. Many a landowner has lamented an overly aggressive mesquite control project only after he discovered that his deer herd shifted their home range to the neighbor's thick brush.

Another seldom recognized use of mesquite is the dubious value of the leaves as browse. No one would rate mesquite leaves as desirable browse. However, deer must not know this, since several different dietary studies have confirmed that mesquite leaves make up a significant part of their diet. In these cases, deer may be eating mesquite leaves out of necessity, during times of the year when other more preferred plants are not available.

Mesquite, in some areas, supports populations of mistletoe. Mistletoe is an excellent deer food plant, being an evergreen with high nutritional quality 365 days a year. Many a veteran deer hunter and rancher have pulled clumps of mistletoe down to feed or attract animals. The benefits of mesquite are compounded when we consider the high value of mistletoe.

Finally, even the harshest critic must be willing to admit that an old "bull" mesquite is a magnificent and beautiful tree. And, like every aged rancher, the mesquite has endured its share of hard times - severe drought, lightning strikes, vicious hailstorms, tornados, insects, herbicides, bull dozers and chain saws. Mesquite is a survivor. It thrives amid adversity. There is much to appreciate about mesquite even though we may sometimes cuss its success.

Calling All Cooks....

Now Accepting Recipes, Stories and Photos

Do you have a family or ranch recipe that has been around for generations? Does it have a great story or background to go with it? Or maybe you have a great range story, ranch story or an awesome range photo that you would like to share. We are looking for you. The Information and Education Committee is collecting recipes, stories and photos for the next edition of the Trail Boss Cowboy Cookbook.

Submit Recipes, Range Stories and Range Photos to:
srmcookbook@yahoo.com

Please Include Your Name, Ranch Name, SRM Section and City, State with each submission.

All recipes must be original recipes (never published). If it is a published recipe it must be changed by 10%, (such as changing an ingredient or amount, adding an ingredient, changing cooking temperature or time.)

Featured Recipe Of The Month:

From: Trail Boss's Cowboy Cookbook, 1985

Pete Petoskey, Lewiston, Michigan

Arabian Pork Chops (with a Polish flavor)

2 pork chops per guest 1 can mushroom soup per 8 chops

(unless one is a lady) wine, optional

1 tomato per 2 chops mushrooms, optional

1 onion per 2 chops Flour

1 green pepper per 8 chops Oil or shortening

Salt and pepper, garlic salt, flavor salt, and Worcestershire Sauce

Brown pork chops, using seasonings to taste, slice tomato and onions, dice peppers and split mushrooms. Remove pork chops and make a roux (gravy) using mushroom soup, flour, wine and maybe a little water. Remove roux and make a layer of pork chops, tomatoes, onions, green peppers and mushrooms. Then another layer of depending on number of guests. Pour roux over contents. Cover and cook for 1 - 1 ½ hours in 350° oven. When done, remove pork chops and vegetables to platter. Thicken roux if necessary with a bit more flour. Serve with mashed potatoes or noodles.



TPWD Wildlife Biologist Leaves Legacy of Habitat Conservation

PALESTINE – Texas Parks and Wildlife Department wildlife biologist Wesley Brian Littrell, 32, of Athens, was killed last Friday afternoon in a tractor-related accident on the Gus Engeling Wildlife Management Area in northwest Anderson County. He leaves behind an unfinished legacy of habitat conservation.

“Wes was a biologist’s biologist, most content when carrying a drip torch, reseeding an old field with native grasses, disking a fire break, thinning a stand of post oaks, and sharing his passion for the land and the habitat that he loved with all who would listen,” said Carter Smith, TPWD executive director. “I trust we may all take some measure of solace knowing that Wes died on the WMA while doing the work he loved best. He will be missed dearly by his colleagues inside the agency.”

Littrell’s mark can be seen in the native grassland fields he had a hand in creating in East Texas.

“Wes was known for his passion about native habitat management,” said Jeff Gunnels, area manager at the Gus Engeling WMA and Littrell’s supervisor. “He was ‘Mr. Habitat.’”

When he came to the WMA in December 2006, Littrell’s focus was doing the work needed to create demonstration sites he could then share with landowners to make landscape level impacts in native grassland conservation.

Gunnels added. “Wes was a doer who didn’t just come up with ideas, but took the lead in getting the job done.”

Like the native warm season grasses he sowed, Littrell’s reputation in the conservation arena was growing and spreading across the state. Other professionals began seeking his advice on native grassland conversion and restoration.

“He enjoyed working with landowners and showing them what they could accomplish in habitat improvement,” said Gunnels. “He also liked working with kids and teaching youth about habitat conservation.”

Littrell joined TPWD as a student intern in 1996, became an agency employee in the State Parks Division at Eisenhower State Park, was hired in 2001 as a wildlife biologist in northeast Texas counties along the Red River, and was the lead biologist at the Gus Engeling WMA since 2007.

Wes Littrell is survived by his wife Lynne who is expecting their first child in November; parents, Mike and Lynne Littrell of Tom Bean, TX; brother, Brad Littrell and wife Jenny of Hutto, TX; niece, Madilyn Littrell; grandfather, Oscar Wetzel of Tom Bean; father-in-law and mother-in-law, Gary and Malinda Bender of Cresco, PA; brother-in-law, Randy Bender and wife Gwen of Mountainhome, PA; and numerous aunts, uncles, and cousins.

Services for Wes Littrell have were on Tuesday, May 25 at 10 a.m. at the Wynne Chapel on the Austin College campus in Sherman. In lieu of flowers the family has requested memorial donations in Wes’ name be made to the following wildlife conservation organizations:

Texas Chapter of The Wildlife Society
Welder Wildlife Foundation
Wes Littrell Memorial Fund
P.O. Box 1400
Sinton, TX 78387

Texas State Chapter, National Wild Turkey Federation
Wes Littrell Memorial Fund
121 CR 3131
Decatur, TX 76234

TSSRM 2010 Photo Contest Rules

- Photos can be submitted *anytime* during the year - deadline for final submission is September 1, 2010. THERE IS NO ENTRY FEE.
- Limit of twenty (20) entries per member per year.
- PHOTOS WILL BE JUDGED BY SOMEONE OUTSIDE OF TSSRM prior to the meeting. In the event of a large number of entries, the photo contest committee reserves the right to screen the entries prior to submission to the outside judge.
- Winners in each category will receive an 8x10 print. Best in Show and Reserve Best in Show awards will receive a larger print.
- All photographers submitting entries may be considered for random participation prize(s), if given.
- The Photo Contest committee will select at least one photo from each photographer to be placed into a PowerPoint Presentation to be used between speakers at the annual meeting.
- All photos submitted may be considered for use on the TSSRM website, *Grass Roots* newsletter and/or in other official TSSRM publications without compensation, but with photographer credit. Photos may also be used by the Society for Range Management (SRM) under the same rules.
- Submission via email officially authorizes TSSRM (and/or SRM) to use the photos in these venues without further notification.
- All photos submitted must be in **JPG or TIF** format (no BMP, GIF, etc. accepted).
- Maximum photo file size of four (4) megabytes (Mb).
- Photographer must pick category for photo to be judged in – failure to do so will have your entry considered incomplete, and thus, not considered.
- *Please include a description of where the photo was taken in the body of the email.*

Photo Submission:

Email Message Subject:

Photo Contest Entry

Photo Attachment Naming:

B&W or

Color_Category_Photographer_description.jpg

Body of Email:

1. *Description of Photo*
2. *Where Taken*
3. *Your Contact Information*

Photo Submission Example

(2007 Best In Show winner):

Subject:

Photo Contest Entry

Attachment:

Color_Plants_Ron_Hilliard_Wildflowers.jpg

Body of Email:

*Wildflower photo taken on Hwy 82
between Gainesville and Nocona.*

*Ron Hilliard
Stillwater OK*

Email:

Phone:

Email Digital Photos to:

Texas.PhotoContest@rangemail.org

