



Delta Wildlife

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Cover photo by Joe Mac Hudspeth, Jr.

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Social Distancing

BY EMILY CARTER



If you are anything like me, the phrase “Social Distancing” was not a part of your vernacular until this March. While it continues to strike me as a bit of an oxymoron, I have embraced the phrase and its intended definition. Early on, it became clear that the practice of social distancing came with a number of challenges. However, the newfound peace and quiet offered by the practice has also provided me a time to reflect and think about priorities, life and the many blessings that we normally overlook.

Sportsmen have long sought solace in the outdoors. Sportsmen recognize the finest details of their surroundings, the trees, the plants, birds and even insects, all possessing unique configurations in the landscape, with unique colors, songs and even smells. Unfortunately, these subtle details are often lost to the focus of the hunt for game animals or the hopes of filling a cooler with fish.

This spring offers the perfect opportunity for sportsmen to get their entire families out of the house and into the great outdoors, not necessarily to fill their freezers, but to simply share the wealth of information they have gained about the surroundings where they enjoy hunting and fishing. Even the nonsporting members of the family may find it especially enjoyable to simply take a walk in the woods this spring. Look for birds; do a bit of mushroom hunting; show the family the differences between certain species of trees and plants that provide shelter and food for wildlife. If not a nature hike, take the family to a friend's farm and walk the freshly plowed rows looking for arrowheads, pottery fragments and old marbles.

While we cannot enjoy all the things we normally enjoy right now, take this opportunity to get outside and explore a more untouched world where there are no doorknobs to touch and people to avoid. Social distancing does not have to be a prison sentence; it can be a reason to renew all of our love for the natural world around us.

Sincerely,

Emily Carter, Chairman
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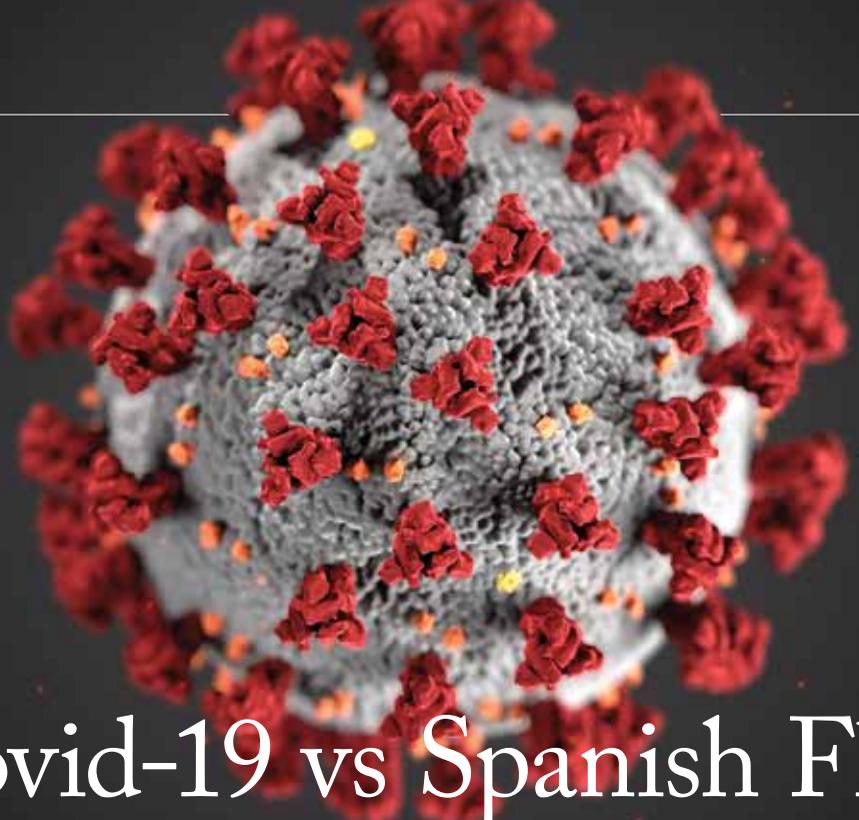
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Covid-19 vs Spanish Flu: Interesting Comparison

BY DR. ROBERT "BOBBY" DALE, JR.

As I write this today, March 26, 2020, foremost on all our minds is the deadly Covid-19 virus that has enveloped our globe in a pandemic. As of today, reports are 495,086 cases worldwide with 22,295 deaths, 4.5 percent. In the United States, there are 69,684 cases with 1049 deaths, 1.5 percent.

As badly as this virus is, and has stymied the world socioeconomically, it is not yet and hopefully will not approach the numbers of the global pandemic caused by the Spanish Flu beginning in 1918 in which 50 million people died, 675,000 in the United States.

Some basics about flu viruses: The main strains that cause illness in humans are types "A" and "B." Type A can affect birds and pigs, as well. Thus, the monikers "bird (avian) flu" and "swine flu," depending on the one present at the time. Type B is found only in humans. Both A and B are RNA strand viruses that are prone to mutate or incorporate viral particles from other viral strains, thus remaking themselves into different new potentially virulent organisms. This is basically what happened in 1918 and again in 2019 with our current Corona virus plague.

Interestingly, the Spanish Flu began in our own U. S. state of Kansas when a strain of Flu A mutated. It spread rapidly among military installations in our country and was carried to Europe mostly by our troops as the "Great War" neared its end in November 1918. In Spain more than 100,000 people became ill within two weeks, and the media nicknamed it, "Spanish Flu." Back then our citizens were ordered to wear masks, and schools and businesses were closed. The medical treatment consisted of aspirin for pain and fever, epinephrine for pneumonia and oxygen for those with shortness of breath. The Mississippi A&M college newspaper, The College Reflector, reported 1,800 ill students with 52 of them dying. The basement of George Hall on campus reportedly was used as a temporary morgue.

Of interest also is the fact that WWI accounted for 20 million deaths, half of them civilians, and by 1920 Spanish Flu had killed 20 million more people worldwide. It is estimated one of four of the world's 1.8 billion population was infected and the math computes to 2.7 percent mortality. Today our global population is approximately 7.8 billion and so far, we have 22,295 deaths to Covid-19, approximately 3 per million people.

Medical technology has come a long way in our world. Health preventative measures, medications, mechanical ventilators, modern hospitals/ICUs, the list goes on. It was felt by some medical people a century ago that those who had recently had an influenza illness seemed to have had some degree of immunity and a better chance of surviving Spanish Flu. I'm sure those studies are being conducted for Covid-19, but it is certainly too early to know. The Spanish Flu seemed to be more lethal in the young population, whereas Covid-19 more readily kills the elderly and those with chronic disease states. The Covid-19 crisis is ongoing as we await warmer weather which is expected to help end it. As for now, it is best to adhere to CDC and state medical guidelines that are being closely monitored and updated daily.

I'm confident the world's population has a much better chance of surviving Covid-19 than those unfortunate individuals a century ago did with Spanish Flu. Be safe!

In writing this article, I used Wikipedia, updated news outlets, an article from a Columbus and Starkville, Miss., newspaper, The College Dispatch, March 14, 2020 edition entitled "How the 1918 Mississippi A&M Football Team Battled A Pandemic and Wartime to Play Its Season," and an online global map/statistics produced by the Center for Systems Science and Engineering at Johns Hopkins University.

Delta Wildlife Board Member Highlight

Lawson Gary

BY AMY TAYLOR

*"When tillage begins, other arts follow.
The farmers, therefore, are the founders of human civilization."
Daniel Webster*

Delta Wildlife Board Member Lawson Gary represents his family's 7th generation of cotton farming in the United States, 5th generation in Mississippi and 4th generation of farming on Wildwood Farm in Money, Mississippi. Originally purchased from Charles Merrill (a founder of Merrill Lynch) in 1936 by his great grandfather, Hugh Lawson Gary, Wildwood Farm has not only thrived as a row crop farm throughout the years, but it also is the cornerstone of two additional industries: True Cotton® and reginned motes, both under the umbrella of the TJ Beall Company. The above quote has been embraced by the TJ Beall Company and explains the manufac-

"Our area is well positioned to be the storytellers to a new generation of consumers who are demanding transparency and are eager to learn about sustainable and responsible land husbandry. We will have Delta Wildlife to thank when the value of these practices are rewarded by society."

turing projects that were spawned by the industry of cotton farming on Wildwood Farm.

Lawson serves as CEO of the TJ Beall Company, a manufacturer and supplier of an array of natural cotton fibers for nonwovens, traditional textiles, technical textiles and paper industries. While True Cotton® manufactures nonwovens for personal care such as baby diapers and feminine care products, the reginned mote plant recycles the waste from cotton gins into usable fiber for paper, nonwovens and traditional textiles.

Aside from farming and managing the TJ Beall Co., Lawson is an avid hunter who grew up hunting in the Money area at Backwater Brake Hunting Club and is currently a member of Goose Pond Hunting Club. He serves on the Cotton Ginning and Classification Committee of Delta Council and on the Technical Advisory Committee of INDA, the Association of the Nonwoven Fabrics Industry. A graduate of Pillow Academy, Lawson attended the University of Mississippi before graduating from Delta State University with a B.A. in English. He and his wife, Dana, are the parents of two children, Hugh (age 6) and Lyla (age 3), and are active members of the First Presbyterian Church of Greenwood.



Lawson has often turned to Delta Wildlife to implement successful land and wildlife management programs on Wildwood Farm. "Over the years, my family has worked with the Delta Wildlife team on installation of CSP, CRP, WRP, QRP, drainage systems and grant applications," Lawson says. "They've advised us on our sustainable farming practices, such as the Syngenta Pollinator Program. They have also helped engineer, develop and install a 160-acre Green Tree Reservoir at McIntyre Lake. Through Delta Wildlife, we've improved the sustainable aspects of our farm that in turn benefit our True Cotton® operation."

"Many people may not realize that the Delta is far ahead of many other agrarian areas of our country in regard to land and wildlife conservation. From our personal experience, we have many brands and brand-suppliers who visit our manufacturing operations and tour our farm and are blown away by our conservation practices." Lawson adds, "Our area is well positioned to be the storytellers to a new generation of consumers who are demanding transparency and are eager to learn about sustainable and responsible land husbandry. We will have Delta Wildlife to thank when the value of these practices are rewarded by society."

Birds of Spring



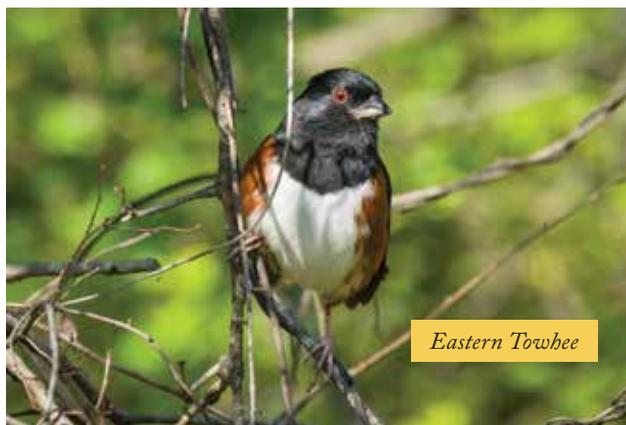
Osprey

PHOTOS BY BILL STRIPLING

BY ADAM T. ROHNKE

Osprey

Osprey are one of our many birds of prey in Mississippi but the only raptor to feed exclusively on fish. This bird can be found across the state near water bodies including wetlands, rivers, lakes, oxbows and ponds. Their coloration consists of contrasting dark chestnut-brown upperparts and bright white underparts. The head is accented with a bold chestnut-brown stripe that runs through the eye and down the neck of the bird. On the chest is a messy arrangement of chestnut-brown spotting that resembles sand. Lastly, the bill has a prominent hook shape. Osprey are large birds with a wingspan over five feet. They can be seen readily flapping those wings as they soar high above shallow bodies of water in search of fish. Once their target is identified, they will briefly hover and then dive, talons stretched out, to capture the fish. They eat a wide variety of fish species ranging from game fish to carp typically ranging 6-15 inches in length. Their vocal display is often described as a series of single hollow-toned whistles at various speeds of repetition. Osprey build large stick nests atop of snags, cliffs and human made structures including utility poles and transmission towers. On their breeding grounds, the cup-shaped nest is created by the female usually less than 3 feet off the ground in a clump of vegetation. There the female lays 1-3 pink or white eggs marked with olive or brown markings. Osprey are a conservation success story as their numbers have dramatically rebounded since DDT pesticides ban. Current threats include entanglement from waste



Eastern Towhee

plastics and spent monofilament line from fishing.

Eastern Towhee

Eastern Towhees are ubiquitous with the Mississippi landscape. They can be found along the sandy soils of the coast to the hills in the north and the gumbo in the Delta. Regardless if an urban, suburban or rural area, Towhees thrive. This robust robin-sized ground-dwelling bird is often heard more than seen. Typically, observers first detect them by ear as they are rummaging through the leaves while foraging in thickets and bushes or

making one of their main vocal displays — the two-part call note *chewink* or the three part up-swinging whistle of *Drink your tea*. If lucky enough to catch a glimpse of the strikingly colored male bird with its jet-black head, throat, wings and tail and dark-orange sides and white belly you won't forget it. Especially a mature male with its fiery-orange colored eye. The females and juveniles present the same pattern of coloration of the males with the black being substituted with chestnut-brown. Being a sparrow, its diet consists of native seeds, fruit, buds, insects and crustaceans. If enough cover is present, they will also use platform-style bird feeders and scratch for spent seed under feeder stations. Towhees nest on or near the ground under thick brush. The cup-shaped nest is constructed with various types of vegetation from the nearby surroundings. Inside, the female lays 2-6 eggs per attempt with 1 to 3 attempts per year.

Brown Thrasher

The Brown Thrasher is another common ground-dwelling bird that inhabits thickets, forest edges and backyards across Mississippi. This larger relative of the Northern Mockingbird possess a similar shape but differs on feather coloration with its reddish-brown head, nape, wings and tail and darkly streaked cream-colored chest and belly. Like their cousins, the thrasher has an extensive vocal repertoire of over 1,000 calls and songs. A so-called life-long learner, an individual bird can readily learn new sounds and mix those sounds into its current vocalizations to create new songs and calls. The key



Brown Thrasher

to identifying a thrasher by their song is counting the repetitions of the vocal display. The jumbled song of random whistles and noises typically consists of a pattern of two where the mockingbird vocalization is displayed in repetitions of three or more. Thrashers use their bill to sweep the leaf litter away to feed upon insects and other invertebrates. For nesting these birds produce a small cup shape nest placed in a low-lying shrub holding 2-6 pale blue or green eggs per attempt with 2 attempts each breeding season.

Adam T. Rohnke is a Senior Wildlife Extension Associate for Mississippi State University. He holds degrees in forest resources, wildlife and natural resource science and environmental studies. He is a Certified Wildlife Biologist®, certified Mississippi burn manager, certified trapper with the Fur Takers of America and an avid outdoorsman. He resides in Clinton, Miss., with his wife, Angel, and son, Oren.

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CELEBRATING A CENTURY WITH YOU, OUR FAMILY!

Science of Turkey Hunting

Collected Data Reveals What Makes a Successful Hunter

BY ADAM B. BUTLER

Hang around a small-town diner, a sporting goods store or any locale where sportsmen gather and it does not take long to notice a pattern in the conversations. There is always the one that got away. The big buck that dodged daylight for four consecutive Decembers. The call-shy gobbler. And of course, the old cliché lunger that will not bite. In telling these stories, some dejected soul seeks consolation, but what they almost always receive instead is condescension.

It is no secret that deep down all hunters truly believe in their prowess. It has something to do with our shared romance for Daniel Boone, Davy Crockett and the American frontier spirit. If they could hack out a living amongst the wilderness, then surely being a natural-born woodsman and crackerjack shot is our inheritance, right? And so, unsurprisingly, every other

hunter has an answer for the one that got away. Just ask them. They will not hesitate to tell you where you went wrong. And you will quickly see what Sherlock Holmes meant when he said, "It is a capital mistake to theorize before one has any data."

Fortunately, there is 25 years' worth of data for Mississippi turkey hunters. And for those willing to listen to its secrets, there are tidbits of wisdom that can offer a legitimate remedy for the one that got away. The data I am referencing is part of the Spring Gobbler Hunting Survey (SGHS), which was created by Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks (MDWFP) in the mid-1990s to gather detailed information about the state's wild turkey population. The SGHS is a true citizen-science endeavor, and ordinary hunters are its lifeblood.

For a quarter-century, thousands have risen with the sun and recorded what they have seen and heard while hunting. The result

is an incredible overview of Mississippi's turkey flock. The information it provides has been used in countless ways: tracking population change, assessing regulations, and, best of all, understanding the bird's breeding season. Perhaps most interesting is the data that reveals the essential ingredients of a successful spring outing.

When, where and how?

Since its inception, the SGHS has documented more than 2.9 million gobblers of the wild turkey. The data shows peak gobbling usually falls during the first week of April, but a closer inspection reveals significant geographical variation. For example, gobbling activity rises much earlier in southern Mississippi and crests around March 20. It remains constant through early April when it eventually dips into a lull around April 10. On the other hand, gobbling can be almost nonexistent during March in our northern counties, and quickly reaches a crescendo around the time gobbling farther south begins to stall.

The SGHS also has asked participants questions about their tendencies and habits while in the field. When these responses are coupled with their observations and harvest, it becomes easy to measure the factors contributing the most to hunting success. For starters, there is a clear relationship between success and the amount of private land to which a hunter has access. The success rate of hunters who only hunt one or two private tracts is no better than those who solely hunt public land. Meanwhile, hunters blessed with three or more tracts realize an approximate 30 percent gain in average success rate because of their increased access. Just as importantly, hunting pressure is a strong predictor of outcome. Hunters on lightly pressured properties bag birds almost twice as often as hunters on properties more heavily pressured.

In addition, the survey illustrates the tools and tactics that, on average, put birds in the bag more often. For example, hunters who use nontraditional type calls such as wingbone, trumpet, tube or scratch-box style bag about one of every eight or nine gobblers they

encounter. In contrast, those who primarily rely on diaphragm or box calls only bring home one per 14 or 15. Carrying decoys also helps. Their use yields a 28 percent advantage over hunters who rarely or never employ them. If the birds are not talking, hunters who choose to sit in one place and wait are about one-fifth less likely to harvest a bird as those who prefer to "run and gun." Shooting range matters, too. While only 5 percent of hunters say they feel comfortable shooting beyond 50 yards, this subset is about 50 percent more successful than everyone else. Unfortunately, this gain comes with a regrettable price. The tendency to take shots beyond 50 yards translates into a 60 percent increase in misses and a 40 percent increase in crippling loss.

How are the best hunters different?

When the most successful turkey hunters in the SGHS are compared to everyone else, stark differences emerge. First, the top turkey hunters are considerably better at their craft. For instance, it takes most hunters 8 to 12 hunts to harvest a gobbler. The top 10 percent of turkey hunters, on the other hand, produce a bagged bird on about every third trip afield (note: SGHS participants can record toms they call in for others; therefore, some hunters document more than their three-bird bag limit). To put that contrast in different terms, the average hunter hears about 16 individual gobblers for each gobbler he or she bags. Meanwhile, the top-tier hunter bags one gobbler out of every five heard.

So, what makes them so much better? It's almost entirely in their approach.

Finally, when asked, the top 10th percentile is likely to be extremely selective when choosing the set-up spot from which the hunter attempts to work a gobbler. They are 20 percent more likely to say that the right setup is the most critical determinant of consistent success even when compared to calling ability, woodsmanship, patience, knowledge of the terrain or local turkey abundance. So, scout a lot and choose your hiding spot wisely.



2020 Spring Fishing Forecast

BY THE MDWFP FISHERIES BUREAU

Northeast Mississippi

Another good year for anglers is expected in this region. Recent supplemental forage stockings of threadfin shad at Lake Lamar Bruce are expected to aid the bass population. Kemper County Lake also has received approximately 80,000 threadfin shad, which will benefit the bass and crappie populations. If you are looking for trophy redear sunfish or flathead catfish, Tippah County Lake offers both. Elvis Presley Lake has an excellent catfish fishery, and Lake Monroe and Lake Lamar Bruce are producing trophy-size bass. These lakes have great bream fishing that can be accessed from the bank.

Anglers who want to avoid the crowds should consider checking out Lake Lowndes State Park. “We saw multiple trophy-size bass during our fall electrofishing surveys and a healthy crappie population that is often overlooked by an-

glers,” said MDWFP fisheries biologist Dustin Rodgers. Lake Lowndes also received supplemental bream stockings in 2019.

The Tennessee-Tombigbee Waterway should continue to provide consistent results for crappie, bass and catfish. Bay Springs and Columbus lakes boast healthy bass and crappie populations. “Fall electrofishing produced a large number of big, healthy crappie on both lakes. If you’re looking for waterbodies with less competition for crappie, then I wouldn’t hesitate to give either of these lakes a try,” said Rodgers.

Pickwick Lake should continue to produce quality bass, crappie and catfish in 2020. Crappie anglers should expect Bear and Yellow creeks to provide good crappie numbers, as they have in years past. The black bass population appears to be stable, and the opportunity to catch largemouth, smallmouth and spotted bass in the same trip draws anglers from all over the Southeast.

Northwest Mississippi

Most fishing in Northwest Mississippi occurs on the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers’ flood control reservoirs (Arkabutla, Sardis, Enid and Grenada) that get about 1.5 million hours of fishing annually, mainly for crappie.

All reservoirs but Sardis overflowed their emergency spillways in 2019. Flooding reduced anglers’ spring catches; peak success was in summer as lake levels fell. Crappie numbers were good, particularly for younger black crappie, although more than 95 percent of the harvest was white crappie. Most keeper white crappie were spawned in 2016. It takes five to seven years to grow a trophy white crappie.

Largemouth bass numbers rose with higher water; the best populations were on Sardis and Enid reservoirs. Few anglers fish for bass, and even fewer keep any; populations mainly fluctuate with water levels. White bass were scarce. Shad numbers declined from repeated winter water releases, but they had a good 2019 spawn. Bream populations expanded, but there were few bream anglers. Blue catfish were common except at Enid. Blues were larger than channels, with some more than 30 pounds. Shad or flavored chicken are better baits for blues than “catfish baits.”

Tunica Cutoff had three peaks over flood stage in 2019 that hampered boat access and fishing, but that means more fish in

2020. There was another die-off of Asian carp, which should benefit sport fish.

Food, lodging and other amenities are available in Hernando, Batesville, Grenada, Tunica and other nearby towns. There are MDWFP state parks on Sardis, Enid and Grenada Reservoirs; book ahead as they fill up quickly during peak fishing times.

Mississippi Delta Lakes

The Delta has experienced high water for the past three years. High water usually means a better spawn. “We should start to see the benefits from the past years of spring flooding soon,” said MDWFP fisheries biologist Chad Washington.

The Mississippi and Yazoo rivers are high once again, affecting water levels on many oxbow lakes in the Delta. “If you live in the Delta, you’re no stranger to spring flooding,” stated Washington. “Fishing gets a little harder when the water is high, but on the other hand, the high water can lead to a really good spawning season. Once the floodwater on the Delta oxbows goes down, the fishing here should be excellent.”

Lake Washington is expected to have another excellent crappie season this spring. Good crappie catches are already being reported from the lake. “Although Lake Washington is known for its great crappie fishing, don’t sleep on the bass or



catfish fishing on the lake,” said Washington.

MDWFP has public boat ramps on many Delta oxbows, including smaller oxbows that are often overlooked but offer good fishing such as Horseshoe Lake, Bee Lake and Roebuck Lake. For a complete list of oxbows with public boat ramps in the Delta, visit the ramps and piers page at www.mdwfp.com.

Central Mississippi Lakes

Fall 2019 electrofishing revealed a healthy largemouth bass population on Eagle Lake with an abundance of fish more than 5 pounds. “We collected big bass in almost every sample throughout the lake,” said MDWFP fisheries biologist Ryan Jones. Trophy bass can be caught at Neshoba County Lake and Lake Calling Panther. These lakes produce lunkers more than 10 pounds every year. March is a great time to catch big spawning bass on their shallow beds. The Ross Barnett Reservoir bass fishery remains in great condition as bass more than 15 inches were abundant during fall electrofishing. According to Jones, “Barnett continues to reload. While quality fish are already present, a large year-class of 2-year-old largemouth bass measuring 12-14 inches will be available to catch while being protected from harvest by the 14-inch minimum length limit.”

Central Mississippi bream anglers do not have to travel far for some of the best bream fishing in the state. According to Jones, “Bream typically average over half-pound at Prentiss Walker Lake, Shadow Lake at Roosevelt State Park and Eagle Lake during spring angler creel surveys.” Ross Barnett Reservoir continues to be a destination for quality crappie fishing in central Mississippi. Crappie averaged nearly a pound during 2019 spring angler creel surveys. Okatibbee Reservoir, Neshoba County Lake and Eagle Lake also contain healthy crappie populations. According to Jones, “While Okatibbee Reservoir is known for producing good

numbers, Eagle Lake and Neshoba County Lake produce quality crappie every year.”

South Mississippi Waters

After the high water subsides and our spring rains diminish, the south region lakes and rivers should be primed for our anglers. Anglers already have caught trophy bass in the 10-pound range at Lake Bill Waller during the last few weeks and recently harvested several quality crappie from Lake Columbia. These catches provide an early indicator of fishing success for anglers this spring and summer. “Population sampling during winter 2020 revealed catch rates dominated by quality-sized largemouth bass and sunfish in the south region state fishing lakes,” said MDWFP fisheries biologist Stephen Brown. Fall sampling in Lake Tangipahoa at Percy Quin State Park produced numerous bass in the 4- to 6-pound range and a variety of quality sunfish. “With increased boat accessibility due to the continued management of aquatic vegetation and great electrofishing survey numbers, expect the numbers and sizes of fish caught to increase this spring at Lake Tangipahoa,” said Brown.

The state lake to target for largemouth bass this spring is Lake Bogue Homa. Tournament catches were near the best in the state with anglers weighing in numerous fish more than 5 pounds and heavy 5-fish sacks throughout the 2019 tournament season. Lake Bogue Homa continues to produce great fishing.

Higher-than-average catch rates of largemouth bass in the Pascagoula Marsh were recorded during spring creel surveys and fall electrofishing. Increased numbers during surveys should bode well for anglers on the Pascagoula River and marsh this upcoming fishing season. In addition, the associated oxbows of the Pascagoula River will be popular and should produce large crappie and sunfish this spring.

Delta Wildlife News

Poachers Conspire and Illegally Kill Nearly 100 Wildlife Turkeys

A group of South Mississippians believed to have killed nearly 100 turkeys during the 2019 season have been charged and arrested. These arrests follow an 11-month investigation by Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks (MDWFP) Conservation Officers resulting in approximately 280 wildlife violations being issued to 14 different subjects.

The following individuals have been arrested:

- ▶ **Kenneth Ray Britt**, (39 of Wesson, Miss.); charged with 142 wildlife violations.
- ▶ **Tony Grant Smith**, (25 of Wesson, Miss.); charged with 68 wildlife violations.
- ▶ **Allen Shelton Morgan**, (48 of Brookhaven, Miss.); charged with 28 violations.

- ▶ **Breanna Jeanine McKay**, (26 of Wesson, Miss.); charged with 5 violations.

This group is believed to be responsible for poaching nearly 100 turkeys and trespassing on 15 properties in Claiborne, Copiah, Franklin, Jefferson and Lincoln counties. It was discovered during the investigation that the illegal activities were not limited to Mississippi. The US Fish and Wildlife Service is also conducting an investigation of the illegal out-of-state hunts.

“This is the most blatant disregard for Mississippi’s conservation laws I have seen in my 33 years of service with this agency,” says Colonel Steve Adcock. “The primary mission of the MDWFP Law Enforcement Bureau is to detect and hold accountable those persons who jeopardize our rich hunting heritage by committing lawless acts such as these.”

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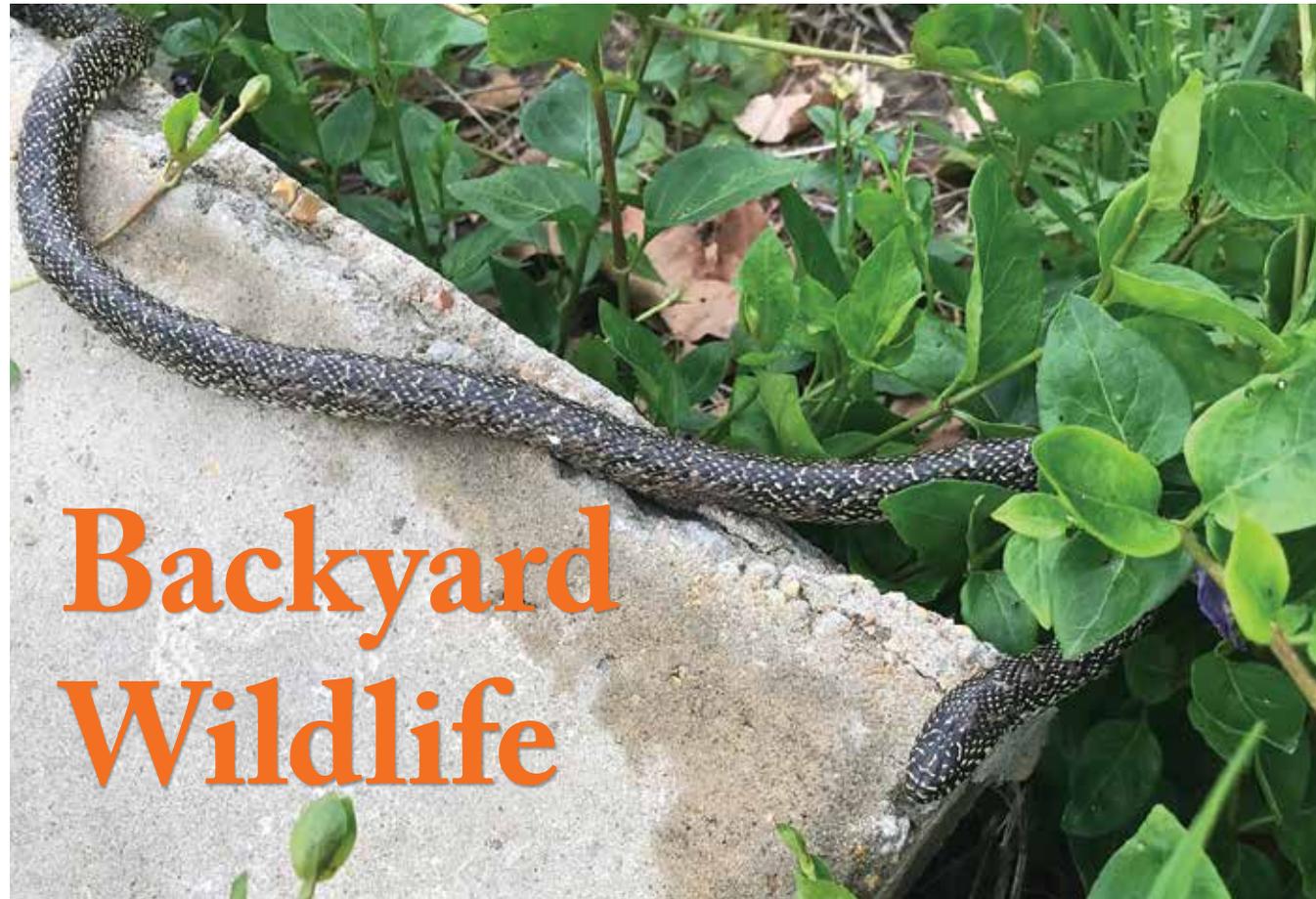
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Backyard Wildlife

DW ARCHIVES

BY TIMOTHY HUGGINS

Spring in Mississippi seems to explode all at once. Gone are gray, dreary days, and there is an explosion of colors. Spring brings crawfish boils, crappie fishing, turkey hunting, gardening, birds chirping, butterflies fluttering about, but it also brings snakes and bees. The good news is most snakes and bees are good for your backyard and signs of a healthy intact mini-ecosystem.

The speckled kingsnake (*Lampropeltis holbrooki*) is a common kingsnake found throughout Mississippi. The snake is mostly black with small yellowish-white specks on each scale. These snakes are great to have around the house as they readily eat rodents and other snakes, which it kills by constriction. Speckled kingsnakes are generally found closer to water than other kingsnakes, but they are sometimes found in drier woodlands and fields. Speckled kingsnakes are quite docile, but if threatened will curl up and shake their tail, mimicking rattlesnakes, to intimidate predators.



Leafcutter bee

ISTOCK

The family *Megachilidae* of bees, often commonly known as Leafcutter or Mason bees, are important native pollinators. These bees are generally blue, black or green. The names leafcut-

ter and mason refer to the way these bees build their nests using mud or plant materials to separate sections for their young to grow. *Megachilidae* bees are non-aggressive unless handled and will gladly colonize bee boxes constructed near gardens. This family of bees are excellent pollinators because their bodies are covered in tiny hairs that easily carry pollen from flower to flower. Some species are managed commercially for blueberry pollination.

Sweat bees of the family *Halictidae* occur all over the world, with approximately 1,000 species in the United States, Canada and Central America. These bees vary in color from blackish to brown, but a few are beautiful metallic green or blue. Hundreds or even thousands of these bees can swarm gardens and be almost unnoticeable because of their small size. Sweat bees are prolific pollinators and extremely important ecologically. These bees are generally ground nesters, solitary, but some species may nest in colonies.



Green Metallic Sweat Bee

ISTOCK

Keep an eye out for some of these species buzzing or slithering around your backyard this spring. To attract more native pollinators, remember to plant flowers with varying bloom times, colors, heights, and plant in large groups to make foraging easier.

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Delta Wildlife Member Highlight:

Jaby Denton

BY AMY TAYLOR

Defined as reformation, rehabilitation or recovery, the spirit of *reclamation* is a cord woven deeply within generations of the Denton family. When Charles W. Partee settled in Quitman County, just west of Marks in the late 1800s, he focused his efforts on the reclamation of marginal Delta land for farming. Four generations later, his great grandson, Jaby Denton, continues incorporating good land management practices to preserve their family land for farming and recreation. Now in his retirement, that core belief in reclamation has come full circle as Jaby is now deeply involved in *Reclaimed Project*, a ministry also vital to strengthening the Delta.

A graduate of Mississippi State University, Jaby took over the family's farming operation at age 15 while his father recovered from a massive heart attack. He comments, "I've been very blessed in my life, especially from growing up and making my living in the Mississippi Delta. I farmed in Quitman County for almost 50 years, retiring two years ago. My retirement goal was to *live and give*, and I've never been busier in my entire life!"

The native Deltan explains, "I left the Delta for Oxford in 1999 and moved back in 2015. Even though I lived in Oxford for 16 years and now have a house in Florida, my real home today is living on the bayou at my farm. Some people say I'm crazy to have moved back home but if that is so, I'm proud to be crazy about the Delta. Most importantly, the Delta is where I want to give back. There is nothing special about me, but we all should reach that point in our lives when it is time to give back—whether that be through conservation of our natural resources, community service or just being good to others. Retirement has allowed me the time to enjoy my community more and serve them as I should. To me, that's *living and giving*."

Delta Wildlife has been instrumental in providing conservation enhancements on the Denton farm throughout the years. Jaby has called upon the expertise of Delta Wildlife in the past and looks forward to engaging their services in the future to enhance his CRP acreage and develop it into wildlife habitat. "We are all fortunate to have the resources of Delta Wildlife to assist people like myself with these types of wildlife and conservation projects." He continues, "I've got CRP land that will no longer be under contract August 1. My

goal is to develop this into a really productive hunting preserve to help promote and fund the many projects *Reclaimed Project* has in the Delta.

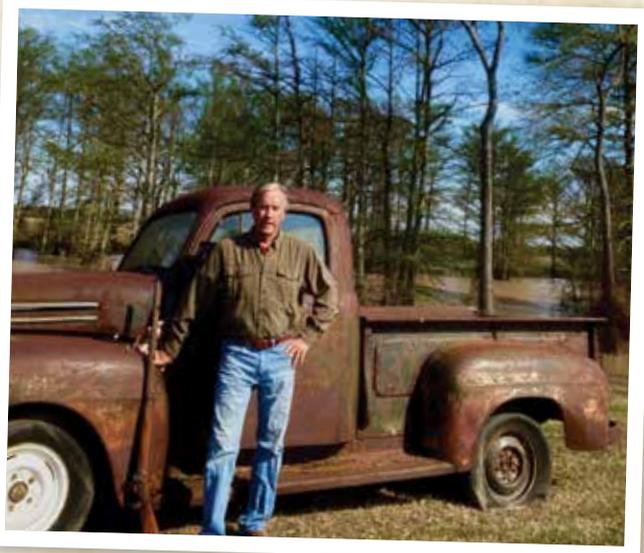
"I'm very proud to be part of the *Reclaimed Project* ministry. Among other programs, we have a Teacher Fellowship Program, which brings in teachers and provides them housing. When a young man from Birmingham was considering being one of our teachers in 2017, he told me, 'If I have a place to hunt I'll be okay.' I told him I had that covered. He really enjoyed those two years hunting deer and duck on my land and enjoying the wildlife in the off-season. He's now a first-year Med

School student at UAB. I hope to see him practicing medicine in the Delta someday. It was no surprise that he fell in love with the Delta and its people."

Jaby adds, "I do love the land, the wildlife and shooting, but I don't consider myself an avid hunter. My daughter will call me in my duck blind and ask if I have a gun. If I'm by myself the answer is *no*, with a guest...*maybe*. I mainly enjoy the people I hunt with. I was hunting in Maryland a few years ago with Col. Oliver North, and he signed his latest novel to me, *To Jaby, the great hunter*." He laughs, "As I shot quite well that weekend, I didn't tell him otherwise!"

Jaby is the father of two daughters, and has two granddaughters and a grandson who live in Nashville and Oxford. Allie, his youngest daughter is a Nurse Practitioner at Vanderbilt's HIV Clinic, and Lindsey and her husband Phil own The Wellness Center of Oxford. He comments, "They are my greatest pride, and I'm so proud of their spirit of giving."

Involved in an array of community service organizations, Jaby received the Governor's GIVE Award for Community Revitalization and the Community Foundation of North Mississippi's Dan Maddox Man of the Year Award. "But I'm most proud of the Community Activist Award I received from our local public high school's Alumni Association. To be accepted and recognized by my community speaks well for all of us. Our mission with *Reclaimed Project* is simply stated, *Do Good. Seek Justice. Defend the Oppressed*. What a great goal for all of us, young and old alike." He adds, "This is the new Delta. I am proud of it, the progress we have made for all and am thankful for organizations like Delta Wildlife that have set a standard of excellence."



JABY DENTON

The use of cover crops is becoming more and more popular in production agriculture. Land owners and farmers can utilize cover crops not only for soil health but to attract and maintain wildlife. A mix of different seed can be very beneficial as compared to a monocrop. It helps with biodiversity in the soil, but it also helps to keep growth of the plants at different stages, which keeps deer around longer because they are constantly finding the new growth. Outlined here is a mix of a grass, brassica and legume.



Crimson Clover

Crimson Clover

Crimson clover is a cool-season annual in the South that has been used in food plots for quite some time. It is fairly easy to grow and is more tolerant of poor soils than other clovers, which helped lead to wide usage. Crimson clover, like other clovers, is very attractive, nutritious and digestible for deer. Being a legume, it can help you save money on fertilizer by fixing nitrogen and putting it back into the soil. Another big benefit of crimson clover is that it is much more inexpensive as compared to other clovers used for wildlife. When picking a legume for your wildlife food plot mix, crimson clover is a good choice. When in a mix, it should be seeded at four to eight pounds.

Rape

When choosing a brassica for your food plot mix, you should keep rape in mind. Rape is a cool-season annual forage that is extremely versatile. It is quick to germinate, and it is adapted to a wide range of environments and soil types that can be grown virtually anywhere. Rape is extremely cold tolerant which allows it to provide quality forage when it is very cold and other plants are dormant. It also is very digestible and nutritious, with more than 30% crude protein. When in a mix, rape should be seeded at two to three pounds.

Cover Crops

BY JC CLEMENTS



Black Oats

Black Oats

Black oats are a cool-season annual grass that is becoming more and more popular for both cover crop and food plot mixes. These oats are fairly easy to grow and will survive in very poor quality soil. Black oats have many different attributes that make it more desirable than traditional oats. They have higher nutritional value, palatability, tillering ability and digestibility compared to traditional oats. They are also very high yielding with forage yields like cereal rye. When choosing your next food plot mix, take a hard look at black oats for an easy stand and high attraction for deer. Black oats will make up the bulk of your seeding and should be seeded around thirty to forty pounds.



Rape



Delta Wildlife:

30 Years of Service to the Delta

Delta Wildlife was founded in May of 1990 on the banks of the Mighty Mississippi River as Senator Thad Cochran addressed the original founders who started the organization to conserve, enhance and restore wildlife habitat in the Mississippi Delta. As the organization continues to grow and address those issues most important to its members and the Delta region, it pauses to look back over the years.

1990—Mississippi Partners for Waterfowl Established

Before the ink was dry on Delta Wildlife's first letterhead, the organization joined forces with Ducks Unlimited, Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to establish the Mississippi Partners for Waterfowl. The landmark partnership was used to leverage funds to be spent on private lands to enhance waterfowl habitat in the Mississippi Delta. It found success early on as the partnership distributed water control structures to farmers to impound water for migrating ducks. Many recipients of these pipes began referring to the program as the "Pipe Program." Today, the program continues with the support of more than 30 partner organizations and has helped improve nearly 200,000 acres of waterfowl habitat in the Delta.

1991—First Delta Wildlife Expo

The first Delta Wildlife Expo was in the fall of 1991 at the Washington County Convention Center in Greenville, Miss. The event found great success and acceptance as sportsmen and families flocked to the event from the region. Delta Wildlife used the event as an opportunity to educate the public about the great outdoors, conservation and wildlife in the Delta through numerous seminars and demonstrations.

1992—Nesting Box Program

In 1992, Delta Wildlife established the nesting box program. The first associated project was the establishment of a 250-mile Bluebird Trail along the mainline levee of the Mississippi River, from Memphis to Vicksburg. More than 500 bluebird-nesting boxes were installed along the levee by 1993. During this same period, Delta Wildlife also began to construct and distribute wood duck nesting boxes and predator guards. Over the years, the program has expanded to include butterfly boxes, bat boxes and prothonotary warbler and wood duck nesting boxes, with wood duck nesting

boxes being the most popular.

1993—Fisheries Restoration Program

Robroy Fisher, Chairman of the Delta Wildlife Fisheries Committee in 1993, announced the organization's intent to address numerous fishing issues in the Delta. The organization reported the installation of 12 new boat ramps, 275 fish attractors and more than 100 spawning beds in 15 lakes throughout the Delta. The organization continued earlier efforts by including additional lakes. Furthermore, Delta Wildlife mapped all of these lakes, boat ramps and fishing structures. Other fisheries projects evolved over time, including a Christmas tree collection and distribution program and the current Adopt-a-Lake Program.

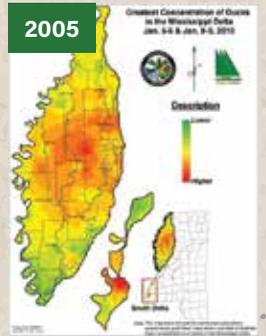
1994—Model Farm Program

Demonstrating proper wildlife management and conservation techniques have always been one of the most effective forms of educational outreach. Delta Wildlife recognized this early on and established the Model Farm Program. Different categories of "model farms" were established. Among the first two model farms was Little Twist in Yazoo County and the Delta Pine & Land Company farm at 27 Break in Bolivar County.

1995—Reforestation Program

Delta Wildlife began planting bottomland hardwood trees in the Delta on a large scale in 1995. The organization established a cost-share program whereby seedlings would be donated to the landowners who wished to convert smaller tracts of land to bottomland hardwood forests. On a larger scale, Delta Wildlife began reforesting wetland mitigation lands for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and Wetland Reserve Program lands for the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service. Today, the organization has planted nearly 100,000 acres of trees and depending on demand, continues to plant a minimum of 1,000 acres annually.





1996—Habitat Seed Program

Through a partnership with RMI and Pioneer Seed, the Delta Wildlife Habitat Seed Program was born. Each year since, the organization has offered its membership discounted food plot seed to be planted for the benefit of wildlife. Winter wheat has remained the staple of the Fall Seed Program. However, the Spring Seed Program has been quite diverse over the years. With the addition of Monsanto's partnership in 2007, the Habitat Seed Program now offers Roundup Ready technologies to Delta Wildlife members managing food plots for wildlife.

1997—Water Quality Initiatives

The Agricultural Practices Committee of Delta Wildlife invested heavily into the Mississippi Delta Systems Evaluation Areas project. This project was established to document and demonstrate the environmental benefits of various agricultural conservation practices. Through the process and other events, the idea for what became Delta Farmers Advocating Resource Management (Delta F.A.R.M.) was born.

1998—Conservation Easements

Delta Wildlife received its first conservation easement in 1998. The concept and process was new to Delta Wildlife as well as the State of Mississippi. Up until then, the idea of placing restrictive covenants on land to protect wildlife habitat and aesthetic values was quite new. But the idea seemed much more logical when the Internal Revenue Service began offering significant tax deductions to landowners who protected lands through this process. Delta Wildlife has continued to receive, manage and monitor conservation easements since then in the 18 Delta and part-Delta counties of northwest Mississippi.

1999—Education Programs

Delta Wildlife has provided educational opportunities to its membership and the public through various methods from the very

beginning. However, there had never been any formal programs established and sustained. In 1999, Delta Wildlife began offering annual Hunters' Education Classes certified by the State of Mississippi. Furthermore, the organization established the Conservation in the Classroom Program where schools and civic organizations could request conservation programs and projects supervised or presented by Delta Wildlife staff.

2000—Continuous CRP Sign-Up

The National Conservation Buffer Initiative made the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) relevant in the Mississippi Delta. Up until that time, CRP incentive rates were far too low in the Delta to make it a feasible option for landowners to consider. However, this new program provided significantly higher incentives for CRP adoption and seemed custom made for Delta landowners. Furthermore, the CRP practices under this new initiative would be offered on a continuous basis known as a Continuous CRP Sign Up, allowing landowners to enroll at any time rather than wait on a sign up period every couple of years. Delta Wildlife quickly began working with the USDA to foster adoption in the Delta and continues to spend much of its time working with USDA and private landowners to best utilize the many conservation options offered under the Continuous CRP program.

2001—100,000 Acres Enrolled in the Wetland Reserve Program

The Wetland Reserve Program was first established in 1991 and gained significant popularity through the mid and late 1990s. Delta Wildlife established itself as a partner with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service in 1995 to assist in the restoration of Wetland Reserve Program lands in the Delta and has restored approximately one-third of all Wetland Reserve Program lands in Mississippi. In 2001, the USDA met a landmark goal in Mississippi, enrolling 100,000 acres into the program. The program continues to be successful today and is quickly approaching the

200,000-acre mark.

2002—Quail and Grassland Songbird Habitat Restoration Program

Delta Wildlife began a landmark project in 2002 titled the Quail and Grassland Songbird Habitat Restoration Program. The project was to capitalize on opportunities presented by the new CRP Continuous Sign Up practices to restore quail populations in the Delta. Grasslands were planted throughout the Delta, and the response of quail and other birds were documented. The success of the project stimulated enrollment in CRP practices benefiting quail populations in the region. Furthermore, the project and associated research was used to modify existing CRP practices and establish new practices that are now used to benefit quail and other birds.

2003—Bee Lake Restoration Project

The Bee Lake Restoration Project was the first comprehensive watershed and lake restoration project undertaken by Delta Wildlife. The organization worked with the primary farmland owners around the lake to reduce sediment loads coming into the lake and improve lake water quality for fisheries. Other project partners assisted in different aspects, as a new weir was installed, noxious aquatic weeds eradicated, new boat ramp installed and additional wildlife habitat created. In three years, sediment loads coming into the lake were reduced by 67 percent, increasing fish reproduction potential. The project has since served as a model for the restoration of other Delta oxbow lakes. Today, projects at Wolf Lake, Steele Bayou, Porter's Bayou, Lake Washington and Harris Bayou are using the Bee Lake Project as a model to generate similar results.

2004—Bobwhite Quail Initiative

The research and benefits documented from the Delta Wildlife Quail and Grassland Songbird Habitat Restoration Program were

leveraged in the justification for the USDA to expand Continuous CRP and establish a special federally funded CRP Northern Bobwhite Quail Initiative. The initiative was intended to create 250,000 acres of new quail habitat by planting grass buffers, much like Delta Wildlife had been doing previously though its local project. The only difference, this initiative provided significant incentives to landowners to establish this new habitat.

2005—Waterfowl Research Program

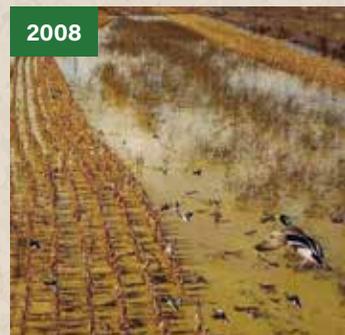
With the exception of the 1999-2000 duck season, it seemed as if fewer and fewer ducks were migrating into the Mississippi Delta each year since the 1980s. This informal, but consensus based observation raised many questions. In 2005, Delta Wildlife began funding waterfowl research to help answer many of these questions and refocus on how Delta Wildlife would implement waterfowl projects in the future. Among the projects funded was a winter waterfowl survey that helped document the number of waterfowl that visit the Delta each winter and the distribution of those ducks within the Delta. Delta Wildlife continues to support the waterfowl surveys and other research today.

2006—Feral Hog Research Program

Feral hogs are one of the most destructive non-native wildlife species in Mississippi. In the Delta, newly reforested lands adjacent to croplands created more opportunity for expanding populations to grow even more rapidly. And the destruction created by these animals became more noticeable as cotton acres were replaced by corn. In 2006, Delta Wildlife began to work with researchers to better identify how feral hogs may best be controlled and communicated this information to landowners who needed help with feral hogs.

2007—Wildlife Forestry Program

Delta Wildlife's primary purpose has always been to provide sound guidance and technical assistance to private landowners on





how to best manage their wildlife resources and associated habitats. But on forested lands, it is often difficult to balance wildlife objectives of the landowner with the economic engine created by timber production. For this reason, Delta Wildlife created the Wildlife Forestry Program.

2008—Catfish Pond Restoration

With the 2008 Farm Bill debate underway, more than 25,000 areas of catfish ponds lay idle in the Mississippi Delta. It seems as if these lands could provide many environmental benefits if a conservation program could be properly structured. Delta Wildlife, Delta Council, Catfish Farmers of America and many others began to develop such a program with the guidance of the USDA Farm Service Agency and Natural Resources Conservation Service. The result was a new CRP practice authorized in the 2008 Farm Bill exclusively for abandoned or idle lands formally in aquaculture production.

2009—Monsanto Pipe Program

Water control structures have been proven over the years to be one of the most accepted and productive tools to address various natural resource concerns in the Delta. In 2009, Monsanto gifted \$1.5 million to Delta Wildlife to provide 1,000 water control structures to farmers and landowners in the Delta to improve water quality. This was a part of a larger \$5 million contribution to several conservation and commodity groups throughout the Mississippi River Basin to improve the overall water quality of the Mississippi River and Gulf of Mexico.

2010—Migratory Bird Habitat Initiative

After the BP oil spill, hundreds of millions of dollars were made available to address ecological and environmental impacts of the

spill. Delta Wildlife, along with a long list of other conservation groups, worked to help secure funding for what would become the Migratory Bird Habitat Initiative in partnership with the USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service. This program provided incentives to private landowners to flood wetlands and cropland in the early fall for migratory shorebirds and waterfowl that typically over-winter in what was then compromised habitats of the Gulf Coast marsh. This effort directly benefited the Ark/La/Miss Delta region.

2011—The Flood

1927, 1973 and 2011 are years to remember for those who live in the Delta. The 2011 Flood inundated 1,229,000 acres in the Delta, including 612,000 of unprotected batture and 617,000 “supposedly” protected lands in the south and northeast portions of the Delta. This event was catastrophic to wildlife. Delta Wildlife mobilized to bring Mississippi State University Extension Wildlife professionals to the Delta to help address concerns and document the impacts. Delta Wildlife worked with landowners to prepare for the rising waters using its GIS capabilities and flood mapping. After the waters receded, Delta Wildlife hosted several educational meetings for landowners in the recovery.

2012—Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program

Delta Wildlife collaborated with The Nature Conservancy in 2012 to help establish Mississippi’s first Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program. This program provided incentives to Delta landowners to plant riparian forest buffers and reforest flood prone areas. CRP and WRP programs were, and continue to be, available to do some of the same things. However, this program offered higher compensation rates to landowners in critical areas of the Delta.



2013—Focus on Feral Swine

Feral swine populations were swelling throughout Mississippi. Delta Wildlife worked through the State Beaver & Hog Damage Control Board to propose new legislation that increased the penalties for moving feral swine within the state. Delta Wildlife and Mississippi State University hosted a State Feral Hog Summit in the state capital to raise awareness of this serious issue with state legislators. Delta Wildlife, along with Delta Council and Mississippi Farm Bureau also worked to get additional federal appropriations for USDA Wildlife Services to ramp up feral swine control efforts in Mississippi and the Delta. With this, Delta Wildlife also established its own feral swine trapping program to help Delta Wildlife members.

2014—Establish Committee System

Holding true to its pledge to serve its members, Delta Wildlife established a new committee structure to offer every member the opportunity to participate in the development of Delta Wildlife programs and projects. These committees include Fisheries, Forestry, Backyard and Non-Game Species, Education, Dove, Quail, and Small Game, Waterfowl, Deer and Turkey. Today, each member of Delta Wildlife is afforded the opportunity to be as engaged in the organization and the issues they are interested in more than ever.

2015—Deer Management Assistance Program

The Deer Management Assistance Program is administered by the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks to help private landowners and hunting clubs manage deer herds. Delta Wildlife became a partner with the state agency to provide these same services in the Mississippi Delta. Today, Certified Wildlife Biologists at Delta Wildlife help manage tens of thousands of acres of private lands for MDWFP.

2016—Wildlife Impacts

Just as Delta Wildlife helps private landowners manage wildlife populations for recreational purposes, it also assists with the

negative impacts that some wildlife populations can cause. With the strong support from the Catfish Farmers of Mississippi, Delta Wildlife entered into an agreement with USDA Wildlife Services to help curb the effects of bird depredation on the catfish industry.

2017—Farm Bill

While Delta Wildlife has always participated in the development of conservation components of farm bills since its inception, the organization worked especially hard to effect the eventual outcome of the 2018 Farm Bill. In 2017, Delta Wildlife testified before the U.S. Senate Agriculture Committee to advance interests in conservation for working lands and waterfowl habitat.

This helped to yield increases in conservation funding for wildlife through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program.

2018—Maturing CRP Forestland

Since 1985, there have been more than 300,000 acres of bottomland hardwoods planted through the CRP and WRP programs. Many of these areas will be in need of forestry management in the coming years to continue to provide optimum wildlife habitat and maximize future timber revenue for the landowners and Delta region. As directed by its Forestry Committee, Delta Wildlife initiated a massive CRP Timber Inventory Project to quantify the current conditions of CRP timber stands and offer landowners management options to consider as these stands begin to mature.

2019—Duck Season Framework

The Waterfowl Committee of Delta Wildlife developed its initial priorities during their first few meetings. The number one priority was to change duck season framework for Mississippi from a closure on the last Sunday in January to the last day in January. While this small change seemed minor, it would provide duck hunters with the opportunity to hunt up to 6 days later, depending on when the last Sunday fell in each January. The change was finally made through a provision offered by Senator Hyde-Smith in the Sportsmen’s Package signed by the President in early 2019.

Original Delta Wildlife Founders

Bolivar County

- Charles Capps, Jr.
- Kenneth Hood
- Ed Kossman, Jr.
- Henry McCaslin, Jr.
- Rives Neblett
- Jimmy Sanders
- Brother Wilson
- Bob Wilson
- Robert Wilson

Coahoma County

- Harry Flowers
- Margaret McKee
- W. R. Stringer

Desoto County

- William T. Hawks

Holmes County

- R. T. Hardeman
- J. Tol Thomas

Humphreys County

- Billy G. Janous
- Tom Reed, III
- James C. Griffin

Leflore County

- Mickey Black
- John Emmerich
- Henry Flautt
- James S. Henderson
- J. S. Johnson
- Aven Whittington

Panola County

- Robert Dunlap

Quitman County

- L. Jones Barksdale, III
- Robert A. Carson, Sr.
- Lewis Graeber
- Peyton Self
- W. King Self
- Jim Wilbourn
- Billy Yandell

Sharkey County

- James R. Carter
- Rives Carter
- Grover F. Greer
- James Hand, III
- Bill Klaus
- Ben Lamensdorf
- Lynne Moses
- Merlin Richardson
- R. W. Rodgers, Jr.

Sunflower County

- Hugh Arant, Sr.
- Turner Arant
- Bruce Brumfield
- Woods Eastland
- W. W. Gresham, Jr.
- Seymour B. Johnson
- Morris Lewis, Jr.
- Lamar Maxwell
- John McPherson
- Rex Morgan
- Lester Myers
- Henry Paris

Tallahatchie County

- W. B. Dunavant
- Ralph Hand, Jr.
- Frank Mitchener, Jr.
- Rick Parsons
- Walker Sturdivant

Tunica County

- Paul Battle, Jr.
- Charles Berry
- Bowen Flowers
- Mattson Flowers
- R. B. Flowers
- Bill McClintock, III
- Penn Owen, Jr.

Washington County

- Howard Brent
- Lea Brent

Thomas Bruton

- Hank Burdine
- Tom Cameron, III
- John T. Dillard
- Charles Fischer
- Robroy Fisher
- J. B. Joseph, Jr.
- Johnny McRight
- W. A. Percy, II
- Clark Reed
- Michael Retzer
- Harry Vickery
- George Rea Walker
- Paul Watson, Jr.

Yazoo County

- Haley Barbour
- Bob Coker
- Michael Curran
- R. D. Hines
- John Sharp Howie
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Mississippi Timber Price Report

Row-crop commodity markets are the topic of many coffee shop and tailgate discussions throughout the Delta. While not receiving as much attention, the timber market is something that should be monitored and considered by forest landowners. Timber harvests, particularly in hardwoods, may occur in 10-15 year intervals and possibly only 4-5 times throughout the life of a stand. This is drastically different from an annually harvested row crop in that harvest decisions can have profound and long-lasting effects, both in tree composition and growth, and in monetary returns.

Mississippi State University conducts a quarterly survey of stumpage timber prices in Mississippi. Stumpage price refers to the amount a landowner will receive per unit of timber harvested. This price report is intended to serve as a general guide and provide a picture of current market activity and how it relates to historic patterns. Specific management and harvest decisions should always be made in consultation with a Mississippi Registered Forester. Past and present reports along with market commentary can be found at: <http://extension.msstate.edu/content/timber-prices-2013-present>

TRENDS:

- ▶ The 4th quarter statewide stumpage prices for pine products are located in Table 1 and hardwood products are located in Table 2. High and low prices are included to indicate differences landowners could expect to receive.
- ▶ Prices during the 4th quarter fluctuated by region and product type. Compared to 3rd quarter 2019, statewide average prices increased slightly for most product classes except pine poles, pine chip-n-saw, pine pulpwood, and crossties. Regional prices fluctuated between product classes with some experiencing substantial decreases while other regions increased.
- ▶ The oversupply issue is the main contributor to low stumpage prices. North Mississippi prices continue to trail south Mississippi prices because of fewer mills. The housing market increased during the quarter and indications are slightly positive for the housing market in 2020. Additionally, international demand for our forest products continues to suffer impacts from tariffs. Mill expansions and new mills are expected to come online within the next 15-20 months, creating additional market capacity in those areas.
- ▶ Expect to see prices across the state to increase during the 1st quarter of 2020 as wet weather remains. Landowners with "wet weather" properties could expect price premiums during these extremely wet conditions in January. Prices toward the end of the quarter may decrease, depending on weather conditions and demand.

Mississippi Timber Price Report Regions



Table 1: Mississippi 4th quarter 2019 pine stumpage prices (\$/ton)**.

Region		Pine Poles	Pine Sawtimber	Pine Plylogs	Pine Chip-n-Saw	Pine Topwood	Pine Pulpwood
NW	Low	IND	\$9.50	IND	\$6.02	IND	\$0.50
	Average	IND	\$19.20	IND	\$10.16	IND	\$3.02
	High	IND	\$31.51	IND	\$18.91	IND	\$4.50
NE	Low	\$40.00	\$13.00	\$16.00	\$8.00	\$7.00	\$1.00
	Average	\$42.00	\$22.22	\$19.33	\$11.59	\$7.75	\$3.42
	High	\$48.00	\$35.00	\$26.00	\$15.50	\$8.00	\$5.50
SW	Low	IND	\$18.00	\$18.00	\$10.00	\$1.00	\$1.00
	Average	IND	\$29.25	\$20.73	\$12.69	\$3.11	\$5.00
	High	IND	\$37.25	\$24.50	\$17.00	\$5.55	\$8.00
SE	Low	IND	\$25.00	IND	\$13.00	IND	\$4.00
	Average	IND	\$26.47	IND	\$15.74	IND	\$6.10
	High	IND	\$29.05	IND	\$24.00	IND	\$8.00
Statewide	Low	\$32.00	\$9.50	\$16.00	\$6.02	\$1.00	\$0.50
	Average	\$40.20	\$23.15	\$20.22	\$11.75	\$4.16	\$3.93
	High	\$48.00	\$40.00	\$26.00	\$18.91	\$8.00	\$8.00

* IND = Insufficient or No Data Reported

** Product classes are often subdivided into small, medium and large categories. Prices vary according to size.

Table 2: Mississippi 4th quarter 2019 hardwood stumpage prices (\$/ton)**.

Region		Oak Sawtimber	Mixed Hardwood Sawtimber	Hardwood Pulpwood	Crossties
NW	Low	\$31.43	\$11.00	\$2.02	IND
	Average	\$48.83	\$30.96	\$7.95	IND
	High	\$60.00	\$40.00	\$12.25	IND
NE	Low	\$30.00	\$21.60	\$4.00	\$15.00
	Average	\$44.50	\$36.00	\$8.80	\$27.93
	High	\$65.00	\$50.00	\$17.00	\$40.00
SW	Low	\$32.00	\$27.00	\$3.00	IND
	Average	\$45.27	\$35.55	\$4.11	IND
	High	\$53.00	\$47.00	\$5.16	IND
SE	Low	IND	\$35.00	\$7.50	IND
	Average	IND	\$36.67	\$8.04	IND
	High	IND	\$40.00	\$9.21	IND
Statewide	Low	\$30.00	\$19.50	\$2.02	\$15.00
	Average	\$45.86	\$35.17	\$7.30	\$31.16
	High	\$65.00	\$50.00	\$15.00	\$40.00

* IND = Insufficient or No Data Reported

** Product classes are often subdivided into small, medium and large categories. Prices vary according to size.

Source: 2019 prices are from Mississippi State University Extension

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A Springtime Celebration

IN REMEMBRANCE OF STAFF SGT. CARL ENIS

BY JODY ACOSTA

It is March 31, and I should be turkey hunting this morning...or at least that was my first thought when I woke up before coming to the office to write this article and tend to a few other odds and ends that I have been neglecting during the past few weeks of trying to limit exposure and responsibly "social distance."

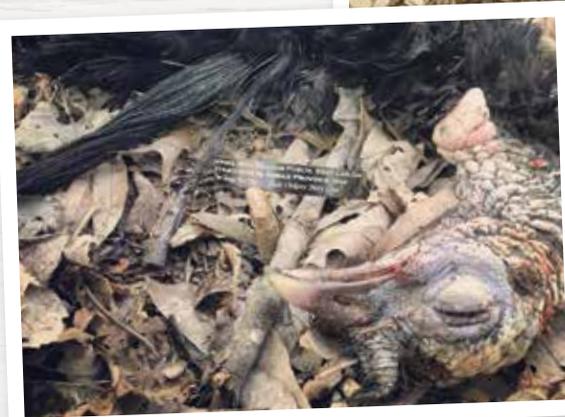
March 31 is a day I will always turkey hunt as long as my health allows; so I will work until lunch and then go try to find a turkey to chase this afternoon. Why today? Why on this specific date will I be in the woods you may ask?

Simply put, Remembrance.

More specifically, it's a happy and sad day; a day I am happy to have become friends with a man that sadly is no longer with us. It is a day of respect, honor and healing in a sense for me. March 31 is one day during turkey season I feel my time is best spent in the turkey woods to honor a friend's memory. Today's hunt will be a success, regardless of whether or not I kill a turkey because I will be celebrating a friend's life. The main reason I am not in the woods this morning is because when I was racking my brain yesterday on what to write an article about, it came to me. I need to tell people about him. I need to tell people about how we met. I need to plant the seed in other's minds so that maybe, just maybe, someone else will be afforded the opportunity to cross paths with someone the way I did — through our love for the outdoors. The opportunity to help someone get in the woods to temporarily escape their hectic lifestyle. An opportunity I thank the good Lord for. You are probably still wondering, "Why today though?"

Rewind two years ago to March 15, 2018, our nation lost seven heroes in Anbar Province, Iraq, in a tragic helicopter crash. The crew of the HH 60 Pave Hawk, call sign "Jolly 51" consisted of four members of the New York Air National Guard's 106th Rescue Wing, Capt. Andreas O'Keefe, Capt. Christopher Zanetis, Master Sgt. Christopher Raguso, and Staff Sgt. Dashan Briggs along with 3 Pararescuemen, Captain Mark Weber of the 38th Rescue Squadron, Master Sgt. William Posch and Staff Sgt. Carl Enis of the 308th Rescue Squadron.

Staff Sgt. Carl Enis was a hunting buddy whom I met through that mutual love of the outdoors via Special Ops Xcursions (more about this later). Today would have been Carl's 34th birthday and today is a day I am especially thankful, thankful for people like Carl



and their sacrifices. I am thankful every day for our men and women in uniform and those that have given their lives for you and me and this great Nation, but today is different in this jumbled up mind of mine. Today is a day I choose to celebrate.

Below you will find the obituary for Carl. In it, you will find the sentence "Sergeant Enis was a true American hero who was known to his family and friends as being the most genuine, self-

less, talented and humble man you would ever know." And no words I could possibly write could better describe Carl.

Obituary for Staff Sgt. Carl Enis

Staff Sergeant Carl Philippe Enis, was born March 31, 1986 in Miami Beach, Florida. Carl grew up in Coral Gables and attended Gulliver Preparatory. He moved to Tallahassee, Florida, to study at Florida State University where he received a Bachelor Degree of Science in Environmental Studies and a Master Degree in Business Administration.

As a Pararescuemen in the United States Air Force, Carl was a member of the 308th Elite Rescue Squadron based at Patrick Air Force Base in Melbourne, Florida.

On March 15, 2018, at 31 years of age, Staff Sergeant Enis was killed in a helicopter incident on the Syrian Iraq border, along with six other airmen. Pararescuemen (PJs) are an elite team of Guardian Angel Airmen who serve as highly trained rescue specialists, providing life-saving trauma care and search and rescue. They are expert marksmen, parachutists, SCUBA divers, mountaineers and trauma medics. They have a special skillset that allows them to perform rescue at all times.

They live by the Pararescue Creed:

These things we do, that others may live.

Staff Sergeant Enis embodied this creed and was named the 920th Rescue Wing Airman of the Year as well as Air Force Reserve Command Pararescuemen of the Year. He was posthumously awarded the Meritorious Service Medal and the Air Force Commendation Medal (with combat device). Enis deployed to support combat operations throughout the Horn of Africa and the Middle East.

Sergeant Enis was a true American hero who was known to his family and friends as being the most genuine, selfless, talented and humble man you would ever know. He was passionate about the outdoors and was an expert at hunting birds and big game as well as offshore fishing, spearfishing and diving. He has left more lasting impressions than most would in a longer lifetime. Additionally, Carl kept active Florida licenses in real estate, insurance brokerage and as a pilot.

Staff Sergeant Enis is survived by his wife, Angela Drzewiecki; his mother, Dr. Colleen Enis; brother, Edward Alexander Enis; and sister, Heather Hyatt and family.

Life without Carl will be difficult. He was such a part of our lives and everyday activities, may God bless him and keep him close.

A graveside service will be held on Monday, May 21, 2018 at 11:00am at Arlington National Cemetery with full military honors.

Contributions may be made to Pararescue Foundation, Last Hope Rescue Florida or That Others May Live Foundation.

In telling you about Carl, and the other souls on board Jolly 51, we are saying their names. We are remembering their lives. We are ensuring their legacy and their names are said. I am also hopeful that some of you will be inspired to extend an invitation to bring someone like Carl hunting or fishing on your property in the future. There are many organizations out there that connect landowners with Veterans and active duty military personnel. My message is simple, find one and reach out to them. It's cliché to say it is "life changing" but I believe it can be.

Above I mentioned, I met Carl through our shared love of the outdoors and a specific group. Shortly before that, I met Scott Graves, founder of Special Ops Xcursions through mutual friends when I was heavily involved in the Bowfishing Association of America. I honestly don't remember the initial contact with Scott or if he reached out and asked first or if I contacted him to volunteer, but I do remember during a conversation enthusiastically agreeing to host a group of Air Force Pararescuemen from Florida in the Delta for a duck and deer hunt. The guy organizing the trip on behalf of the PJs was Carl. We started off emailing details and logistics for the trip, then a group text was started and by the time the guys got to



the Delta, it felt like we had known each other for years.

The hunt was a success and lifelong friendships were made and solidified instantly. I can't recall the exact number of ducks or specific deer we killed, but I can vividly recall the stories sitting around the fire after the hunts with a cold beer in hand. Those are the memories that stick with you from those type events. The ducks and deer and actual hunting is a mere bonus.

The following is an excerpt from the Special Ops Xcursions website (www.specialopsxcursions.com) that details what they are about and what their goals are. The website is full of information if you are interested in learning more about their mission. I underlined a sentence that has stuck with me throughout the last few years and while it is written in regards to recipients of the hunting or fishing adventures, it also rings true for hosts.

"We offer active duty Special Operations Forces (SOF) service members a chance to partner with professional guides & volunteers in the general public for endless opportunities in the outdoors. Through small group excursions, friendships are established that will last for years to come. A daily limit or full tag are just a bonus to the experience. A weekend away pre or post deployment is crucial to team and family well-being. The outdoors can be a powerful healer.

We honor the heroes you do not see on the nightly news. These are the Warriors working behind the scenes, men who lack the time and resources to go on a trip of a lifetime, the men we show how much their country still cares."

The outdoors can be a powerful healer. Let that sink in.

Please take some time and do your own research and if you feel led to volunteer your time or hunting camp/land to take some of our nation's heroes out for a weekend, contact one of the groups like Special Ops Xcursions whose information is at the end of this article. If you are on the fence and interested in more details, contact me directly and I will be glad to share with you more about hosting from a landowners standpoint. The "SOX hunt" week is always the first event that goes on my calendar for hunting season and all other events are planned around that week. It is a week I look forward to tremendously each year and hope you are able to experience that feeling of excitement as well. More so, I hope you are able to meet and be involved in sharing the outdoors with people like Staff Sgt. Carl Enis.

Happy Birthday, Buddy.

<https://www.specialopsxcursions.org/contacts/>
Email: specialopsxcursions@gmail.com
Instagram: [instagram.com/specialopsxcursions](https://www.instagram.com/specialopsxcursions)
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Delta Wildlife Partner Q&A

Carson Nelson

BY AMY TAYLOR

Carson Nelson has over 16 years of experience in the wildlife field working for USDA APHIS Wildlife Services. Currently, he is a Supervisory Wildlife Biologist for the Mississippi Wildlife Services' Delta District and oversees the Feral Swine Program. In this role, he works with landowners, managers, state and federal entities on best management practices to reduce feral swine damage. He uses organized methods to combat feral swine problems in the Delta including trapping, night and aerial operations.

A graduate of Mississippi State University with a Bachelor of Science degree from the College of Forest Resources, he is a Certified Wildlife Biologist through The Wildlife Society. He resides in Onward, Miss., with his wife, Melissa, and two sons, JD and Levi.

DW: Please comment on the history of your partnership with Delta Wildlife.

Nelson: Delta Wildlife and Mississippi Wildlife Services have a long history that started before I arrived in the Delta in 2009. We have leaned on Delta Wildlife's knowledge of property own-

ership, political affairs and overall understanding of the Delta in many of Wildlife Services' programs including Double-crested Cormorant surveys, developing maps and assisting with our aquaculture programs to reduce catfish depredation from fish-eating birds. Delta Wildlife has also been instrumental in providing land parcel and owner data to improve our feral swine aerial operations. Obtaining landowner permission to control a widespread problem like feral swine is essential, and Delta Wildlife has given us many starting points and has orchestrated meetings for us to achieve that goal. Without Delta Wildlife's contacts and relationships with private land owners, our programs in the Delta would struggle.

DW: What are your current challenges with feral swine control?

Nelson: Our current challenges in the Delta are no different than other parts of the Southeast. We are battling a species that has high reproductivity, low mortality and are extremely destructive. We also struggle with the increased interest in hunting

feral swine and movement (illegally and naturally). The Mississippi Delta's rich wildlife habitat and large agriculture land base makes for the perfect storm to have a high concentration of feral swine in areas where they can be most destructive.

DW: Have you seen success, and what are your future efforts?

Nelson: Some of the successes we have seen lately stem from everyone working together. We have seen our state and federal agencies along with nonprofit organizations really come together to address the problem. One thing we have been extremely proud of, is our accomplishment of using aerial gunning as a control method. Our team has worked extremely hard, and many people and agencies have been involved. This method allows us to remove large numbers of feral swine from the landscape in a short amount of time. Conducting aerial operations before planting season allows farmers to plant with less replanting due to feral swine and allows other control methods to be more successful. We have recently completed our winter aerial operations, which provided support to more than 670,000 acres across 13 Delta counties. As for the future, some of the challenges we will face are keeping up with the demand for boots on the ground support to control feral swine. It's a fulltime job and becomes hard work really quickly. Keeping the intensity and unity of the efforts made will be a future challenge.

DW: Please comment on the value of your continued partnership with Delta Wildlife.

Nelson: In January of 2020 through the Farm Bill, USDA APHIS WS initiated a feral swine pilot project in Yazoo, Sharkey, Issaquena and Warren counties to provide assistance with feral swine control. Over the next four years, Delta Wildlife's partnership with this project will address our needs to put more on the ground efforts, data collection and landowner participation. Having a partner connected to the area is invaluable and allows us to quickly address the needs of the operation. I commend Delta Wildlife for staying true to their mission to conserve, enhance and restore natural resources in their respective 18 counties across the Mississippi Delta and look forward to the task ahead.

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Conservation Tracker

BY SAM FRANKLIN

The 2019/20 season was a wet one. By February 1, the central Delta was at a surplus in regards to rainfall year over year. Rain makes everything a little different. Deer don't move quite as well, ducks spread out and are hard to hunt. With a new year comes new hope that the deer you were waiting for will get a year bigger, there will be even more ducks than you prepared for in your hole or that turkey will finally be on the right side of the fence. Here are a couple tips, suggestions and opportunities for you to better your outdoor experience and passion.

Deer

We are starting to see some of the effects of prolonged flooding on deer herd metrics as we expected. Some of the

metrics such as low recruitment (the annual number of animals that are capable of breeding, ie. being recruited into the breeding class), low density in hardest hit areas and low lactation rates. But keep in mind, deer reproduce quickly.

There were a staggering number of CWD samples taken this year to help get a grasp on where the disease was and where it wasn't. The Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks (MDWFP) went through great lengths to make sampling as easy as possible. Therefore, please be sure to submit samples if you're a hunter. Those samples make it possible for biologists to make management recommendations and ultimately get you where you want to be with your property.

Keep watch of your does as the spring transitions into summer and fawn drop approaches. Once does begin to



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drop, you should halt all machinery related practices for a while on recreational property. This practice will give the fawns the much-needed time to get their legs under them and start traveling with the doe.

Ducks

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hold your water as long as you can to aid in broadleaf control. Soil temperature is the hinge pin for the whole practice. Another key to note is that the longer you hold water, the less weeds you will have. There will be a higher concentration of good plants the longer the water inundates the impoundment. But you will have to disturb the soil at least once every three years.

For those planting rice but your hole is too wet to run equipment, consider air seeding. Rice producers have been doing it for decades, and it seems to work pretty well. Water depth is the key. The water has to be at the right level (around a uniform foot). When that rice sprouts a little hair root, drop the water slowly and allow the seed to settle in the mud.

Get your sprayer ready and calibrated. Go ahead and work out what you need to spray and write it down so that when the time comes you can just dump and go, and you won't spend half a day sourcing parts and figuring out calibrations.

Hogs

Shoot all that you see. Hogs cause untold millions of dollars of damage not including time lost replanting, fixing holes and damaged equipment.

Turkey

With turkey season about to wrap up, there's not much to do other than let them rest. The only real practice you can implement is a reduction in mechanical operations around your place. Try not to bush hog or disk if not entirely necessary.

Additional Opportunities

The only other hunting opportunity is the annual spring squirrel season, May 15 to June 1. This can be a load of fun, especially for children.

As another season finishes up and we begin to work for the next one, keep in mind why we do what we do. For some, outdoor time is spent hunting. For others, it's simply an escape from everyday pressures. Whatever your chosen outdoor endeavor is, floating down the Chunky River, hunting spring squirrels in the Mississippi Delta or running your quail dog in a trial on the backland prairie, have fun. The more you get out and about, the more you realize what a jewel Mississippi is.



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