

SOUTH TEXAS WILDLIFE



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at Texas A&M University-Kingsville

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TAMUK File Photo

DUCK DIVAS

by Bart Ballard

It was a warm, sunny day as I left the CKWRI parking lot leading a caravan of 15 female students from the Animal, Rangeland, and Wildlife Sciences department at Texas A&M University-Kingsville on their way to their first ever duck hunt. While traveling to the Aransas Pass boat

Editor's Note: Dr. Bart Ballard is the *C. Berdon and Rolanette Lawrence Endowed Chair for Waterfowl Research* at the Caesar Kleberg Wildlife Research Institute and Professor in the Department of Animal, Rangeland, and Wildlife Sciences at Texas A&M University-Kingsville.

ramp, I was drilled with questions about what to expect on the hunt. I could sense some apprehensive anticipation as we pulled into the parking lot with a group of Texas Parks and Wildlife game wardens waiting for us. The game wardens were there to welcome us and had a hot lunch prepared on a massive barbecue pit just in time for our arrival. The students had been invited to be part of the inaugural Dave Ankney Memorial Duck Hunt.

Dr. Dave Ankney was a prominent waterfowl researcher and professor that made the Coastal Bend bays his winter home after retiring

from a long, productive career in waterfowl ecology and management. During his winters on the Texas Coast, Dave enjoyed duck hunting in Redfish and Aransas bays, and developed close relationships with local waterfowl hunting guides and game wardens around Rockport and Aransas Pass. Dave passed away this past year after a short battle with cancer.

Because Dave had such a positive influence on the local waterfowl community, local hunting guide Captain Steve Johnson initiated the inaugural hunt in Dave's honor. The intent of the hunt was to introduce people to duck hunting, as this was one of Dave's ambitions—always promoting waterfowl and waterfowl hunting. Captain Johnson and the game wardens then contacted me to coordinate getting first-time duck hunters together for the hunt. Fifteen female students with diverse backgrounds were selected to take part in the inaugural hunt; some with no

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By The Numbers

3 clutch size of a hen chachalaca

77–110 weight in pounds of the introduced European mouflon
(A Field Guide to Mammals of North America North of Mexico, F.A. Reid, Houghton Mifflin Co.)



© Bart Ballard

One of our duck hunting groups, along with their guides and game wardens, returning from their successful hunt.

hunting experience at all and others with varying degrees of hunting experience, but none with waterfowl. Captain Johnson, along with another local guide, Captain Dana Smith, donated their time, guides, and airboats to transport and guide the students during the hunt.

After the delicious lunch provided by the game wardens, we discussed the many contributions that Dr. Ankney made to the waterfowl world through his research and personal relationships. It was important that the participants understood how Dave impacted many of us in the group. Commemorating his contributions was the primary reason we were all here. The game wardens then provided a brief firearm safety talk, and the group was divided into hunting parties consisting of 2 first-time hunters and a guide. They enjoyed a scenic airboat ride through the marsh to the duck blinds, which they thoroughly enjoyed.

Once everyone was situated in their duck blinds, it didn't take long

for the large flocks of redheads to start moving around. A large flock of 700 to 800 redheads lifted off the flats to the east and made it our way. Another flock came in from the northeast, and several birds broke from the main flock and were enticed into the decoys of the northern most blinds. As the shotguns barked from the northern blinds, several other flocks arose and the marsh became active with small flocks of ducks zipping around here and there. By the end of the afternoon hunt, all the participants had experienced ample shooting opportunities, and each hunting party came back with harvested ducks.

After a wild game dinner prepared and cooked by the Texas Parks and Wildlife game wardens, each participant was taught to clean the ducks they harvested. It was very rewarding listening to the group enthusiastically talk about their first experience in the duck blind.

It was a well-planned and ideal way to initiate new hunters into duck hunting. As we departed back to Kingsville, the students asked me if they could come back next year and do it again—sounds good to me. ~



© Bart Ballard

Our first-time duck hunters displaying their harvest on the inaugural Dave Ankney Memorial Hunt.

CKWRI NEWS

Ellen B. Randall Joins CKWRI Advisory Board

We are happy to announce that **Ellen B. Randall** has become

our newest member of the CKWRI Advisory Board. Ellen (Houston/Hondo) has served on the boards and advisory councils of various organizations, including the Texas Parks and Wildlife Game Bird Advisory Board,



Ed and Ellen Randall. Ellen recently accepted our invitation to join the CKWRI Advisory Board.

Nature Conservancy Advisory Council, Medical and Surgical Hospital in Beaumont, St. Elizabeth's Hospital in Beaumont, Aspen Institute/Aspen Meadows Board, and Aspen Theater in the Park Board. She is an active member of both the Development Board of the University of Texas and the Advisory Council of U.T. Press, where she served as Chair.

Ellen was born in Wichita Falls and grew up on a nearby ranch at Prairie Flower, Texas. She graduated from Saint Stephen's School in Austin, and from the University of Texas in Austin. She currently spends considerable time working on her ranch in upper South Texas, improving the land and the habitat, and restoring native grasses and plants. She and her husband, **Edward Randall III**, reside in Houston and at their ranch.

CKWRI Scientist Honored

Dr. Leonard Brennan has been recognized for his service toward furthering quail research by the Greater Houston Quail Coalition. Lenny was honored at a reception at the

coalition's 4th Annual Banquet held August 28th. Dr. Brennan is the *C.C. "Charlie" Winn Endowed Chair for Quail Research* and Research Scientist at CKWRI, focusing his research activities toward developing a scientific basis for the sustainable management and harvest of wild quail populations within South Texas and elsewhere. He also is a Professor within the Department of Animal, Rangeland, and Wildlife Sciences at TAMUK.



© Leonard Brennan

Dr. Leonard Brennan was recently honored by the Greater Houston Quail Coalition.

CKWRI Scientist Recognized

The Wildlife Society (TWS) Council awarded the *Outstanding Book Award* to **Dr. David Hewitt** for his contributions and editing oversight of "Biology and Management of White-tailed Deer" published by CRC Press in 2011. David received the award at the TWS annual meeting held October 4–10 in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

David holds the *Stuart W. Stedman Chair for White-tailed Deer Research* at the CKWRI and focuses his research on developing a scientific basis for the sustainable management and harvest of free-ranging white-tailed deer occurring southern



TAMUK File Photo

Dr. David Hewitt received the TWS's Outstanding Book Award for Biology and Management of White-tailed Deer.

Texas, northern Mexico, and elsewhere. He is also a Professor at TAMUK. We congratulate David on his award that recognizes his work on this important volume of white-tailed deer knowledge, benefitting future generations.

STEER Recognizes CKWRI and South Texas Natives

On December 11th, the South Texas Energy and Economic Roundtable (STEER), founded by the 11 largest oil and gas companies in the Eagle Ford Shale region of Texas, recognized *South Texas Natives* (STN) and the CKWRI at STEER's first-ever Eagle Ford Excellence Award ceremony held in San Antonio, Texas.

The award recognized our program for fostering restoration technology that saves the topsoil, promotes the use of native plants on disturbed sites in the Eagle Ford, and partners with the Texas Department of Transportation and the USDA in developing native seed sources for release to commercial growers. Over 50,000 acres will be planted this year in the Eagle Ford Shale region. "These native plants are known to be far better for wildlife than the invasive and non-native plants that have been planted in recent years," said **Forrest Smith**.

We thank STEER for recognizing our efforts and look forward to working with the oil and gas industry in protecting our natural resources. ~



Pictured at the STEER Award ceremony (L to R) was Mr. Henry Cisneros, Mr. Forrest Smith the Dan L Duncan Endowed Director of STN, Dr. Fred Bryant Director of the CKWRI, and Omar Garcia President of STEER.

Consider giving a tax-deductible donation to CKWRI

AS 2013 COMES TO A CLOSE

by Fred Bryant

The year 2013 shot past me like a rocket. It is hard to believe I am writing this summary; this year is NOT supposed to be over yet. As in the past, there were many ups and downs, but definitely more ups than downs this year. Herein is just a smattering of what transpired over the past 12 months.

Thanks to the generosity of the *Caesar Kleberg Foundation*, we began construction of a new meeting room and foyer at the Caesar Kleberg Wildlife Center on campus. This beautiful addition will improve our service to the university, the greater Kingsville community, and our ability to host wildlife seminars and symposia. The *Alkek Foundation* provided funding to add some badly needed outdoor pens to our Alkek deer facility. These were our only 2 construction projects for the year.

We received a new endowment this year, the *Kenneth E. Leonard Fellowship for Livestock: Wildlife Research*. It is a great addition to help us understand the potential use of livestock as a habitat management tool. The *Boone and Crockett Club Fellowship in Ungulate Research* was completed, thanks to a number of Texas Boone and Crockett members. The \$125,000 matching gift from **Bob and Rebecca Palmer** was just what the doctor ordered to finish this \$400,000 endowment.

We graduated 7 M.S. and 6 Ph.D. students this past fiscal year, which

Editor's Note: Dr. Fred Bryant is CKWRI's *Leroy G. Denman, Jr. Endowed Director of Wildlife Research*.

Did You Know?

The American coot also goes by the names mudhen and rice hen.

The pygmy rattlesnake's scientific name is *Sistrurus miliarius*; in Latin "miliarius" means "millet" or "millet-like" likely referring to its blotched pattern. (Poisonous Snakes of Texas, A.H. Price, Texas Parks and Wildlife Press)

ended on August 31st. Since training the next generation of wildlife biologists—those with a deep appreciation of private land ownership and stewardship—is one of the important parts of our mission, I would say “mission accomplished.”

In September, we hosted several events: *Caesar Kleberg Partner* receptions in San Antonio and Houston, *Next Generation* events in Kingsville and San Antonio, and a *Quail Workshop and Restoration Short Course* in Kingsville. In addition, we co-hosted the *South Texas Charity Weekend* (STCW)—the finest fund-raiser in South Texas. Thanks go to the King Ranch and the many donors and supporters who attend this annual event. Last year, STCW honored **Janell Kleberg** for her many accomplishments and her dedication to making South Texas a better place. At the next STCW event in 2014, we are honoring **Joann and Mike Cone** of Houston as our *South Texans of the Year*.

The Institute and our supporters were honored on several occasions

Advisory Board

The Advisory Board of the Caesar Kleberg Wildlife Research Institute provides leadership in all aspects of our work. We are indebted to them for their commitment to CKWRI and its mission.

Gus T. Canales T. Dan Friedkin Henry R. Hamman (Chairman) George C. “Tim” Hixon Karen Hunke A. C. Jones, IV	David Winfield Killam Chris C. Kleberg Tio Kleberg C. Berdon Lawrence Kenneth E. Leonard James A. McAllen Ellen B. Randall	Barry Coates Roberts Stuart W. Stedman Buddy Temple Ben F. Vaughan, III Bryan Wagner Charles A. Williams
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this past year (noted in previous issues of our South Texas Wildlife newsletter). In April, Advisory Board Member **Buddy Temple** and his lovely wife **Ellen** were honored with the *Harvey Weil Conservationists of the Year Award*, while yours truly received the *Professional Award*. On December 8th, we were honored with the first-ever, *Eagle Ford Excellence Award*, presented in San Antonio by the South Texas Energy and Economic Roundtable (STEER), an association of the 11 largest oil and gas companies operating in the Eagle Ford Shale. This award was in recognition of the great restoration and native plant work accomplished

by **Forrest Smith** and his team at *South Texas Natives*.

Last, be on the lookout for a new CKWRI special publication we are developing about the life and career of **Valgene Lehmann**. Val was one of the first wildlife graduates at Texas A&M in the 1930s, and became the first wildlife biologist ever hired by a private ranch when he joined King Ranch in the 1940s. He finished his career in the 1980s here at the CKWRI where he wrote *Bobwhites in the Rio Grande Plain of Texas*, which served as the quail management bible for decades.

We hope 2014 brings abundant rain in the spring when we need it and that our wildlife populations recover from the devastating droughts that have hammered us these past few years. Thank you for all you do for us! ~

What Do They Eat?

Sandhill cranes wintering in Texas often forage on sprouts of wheat, alfalfa, sorghum, corn, and barley. (North American Game Birds of Upland and Shoreline, P.A. Johnsgard, University of Nebraska Press)

The hoary bat is considered an insectivore, feeding primarily on large moths. (A Field Guide to Mammals of North America North of Mexico, F.A. Reid, Houghton Mifflin Co.)

Visit our web page at
<http://www.ckwri.tamuk.edu>



Caesar Kleberg Wildlife
 Research Institute
 700 University Boulevard
 MSC 218
 Kingsville, Texas 78363-8202

Editor: Alan Fedynich, Ph.D.

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