

heat stress which could greatly impact fawn survival," said Cain. "These young deer can become dehydrated quickly and good milk production from the doe is critical. In addition, a lack of fawn cover has been critical this summer."

Temperatures at the soil surface can be excruciatingly hot, Cain stressed. "I worked on ranches in South Texas during graduate school, collecting vegetation samples where the soil surface was nearly 140 degrees. These sites were severely overgrazed with little cover and sparse shrubs and mesquites providing little shade. In these sorts of environments fawn survival is dismal. This is why good habitat providing shade and cooling areas is critical during summers and has been very important this summer."

By taking measures early in the season, hunters can do their part to help deer until relief from the drought comes.

Long-term, Wildfires have positive impacts for wildlife

Despite the hardship endured by those closest to the recent wildfires, time will eventually illustrate the positive ecological role that fire plays. The scarring left by wildfires that consumed more than a million and a half acres in Texas so far this year will continue to fade, according to TPWD biologists; replaced eventually by a landscape in much healthier condition for wildlife.

How long the recovery will take depends on a lot of things, most importantly rain.

"Following sufficient rainfall, recovery of burned vegetation will be fairly rapid," said Glen Gillman. "Wildlife species such as white-tailed deer will move back into burned areas. This may take longer in areas where brush species were hit hardest."

Initial field assessments by TPWD indicate minimal losses to wildlife populations from recent wildfires, although some mortality is to

be expected during large scale fires, and plant communities are expected to recover over time. Individual ranches may see fewer animals until habitat conditions improve.

"Once rains come, forbs and grasses will respond quickly on most wildfire sites," said Chip Ruthven, TPWD wildlife management area project leader in the Panhandle. "Typically with spring fires warm-season grasses will respond better than forbs. Regrowth normally has a higher nutritive content and woody resprouts are more available for species such as white-tailed deer.

Big game animals, such as white-tailed deer, are capable of evading fire, burrowing animals can seek refuge underground and birds fly out of harm's way. Even on ranches having high fences, deer usually can find an escape route.

The impacts to ground nesting bird species, like bobwhite quail and turkey, are tougher to project because nesting cover will take longer to recover. But, they do come back.

"Game bird species evolved with fire and have been observed actively feeding in recently burned areas," noted Robert Perez, TPWD upland game bird program leader. "Seeds become easier to find not to mention the tasty toasted grasshoppers."

Since the fires occurred during drought conditions, nesting attempts were already limited, suggested Jason Hardin, TPWD turkey program biologist.

"The majority of Rio Grande turkeys will not even attempt to nest during drought conditions considering it a better option to put their energy into surviving until the possibility of success is higher in subsequent years," Hardin explained. "That said, on a year like this, if a hen decided to take a shot at nesting and if a nest was lost to a wildfire then I doubt the hen would re-nest. In good years like 2010 a Rio Grande turkey may re-nest several times as long as they have the energy and the temperatures do not get too hot."

Biologists suggest the greatest impacts from the fires will be to reptiles and insect populations, both of which are capable of making rapid recoveries.

Time, rest and rain are the key elements to recovery.

... Bob White Quail
(Continued from page 4)

covey only once and don't chase the singles or pairs, or limit how long you hunt."

Perez also encourages hunting early in the season, which runs Oct. 29-Feb. 26.

According to the National Bobwhite Conservation Initiative, a coalition of wildlife professionals across 25 states, bobwhite quail populations have plummeted nationwide by as much as 80 percent over the past half century by some estimates. In addition, entire suites of un hunted songbirds that depend on the same habitat of native grasslands and shrublands have recorded similar declines.

History has shown bobwhites can bounce back when the weather cooperates and suitable habitat is available. Ideal quail production occurs in years that remain wet and cool during the spring and early summer months because it extends the window of opportunity for reproduction, according to Perez. He noted hens typically would make as many nesting attempts as conditions allow until they pull off a successful clutch.

"We need to manage habitat in preparation for those times," Perez offered. "A majority of bobwhites don't survive the first year even during good times; that's why



Sixteen year old Dustin Davis of Midland brought down this 15 point buck near Tennyson opening weekend of last season. This was only his second deer to harvest. He and his stepdad kept track of the buck on game cameras and on opening morning were ready.

it takes more than one good year to bring numbers back."

Texas is taking a proactive, partnership strategy to address quail declines in Texas through a coalition of state, federal and private stakeholders — the Texas Quail Conservation Initiative. By bringing all stakeholders to the table, the initiative can focus on landscape level conservation.

... Hunting accidents

(Continued from page 10) state.tx.us or call 512-389-4999.

The hunter education course is a minimum 10-hour class over two days that teaches hunting safety, modern and primitive sporting arms, wildlife conservation, management, game laws, outdoor skills and responsibility. When the course is completed, the certification card

is good for life and is honored by all states, Mexico, and all Canadian provinces that require hunter education. Proof of certification, which includes the card or the hunter education certification number printed on the hunting license, must be carried at all times while hunting.

Hunters ages 9-16 must either pass the course or be accompanied by a person who is at least 17 or older licensed to hunt in Texas who has had hunter education or is exempt. Hunters younger than age 9 may take the course but they will not be certified and must be accompanied by a person licensed to hunt in Texas who is at least age 17 or older who has had hunter education or is exempt. Accompanied means within normal voice control and preferably within arm's length.

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