

Grass Roots

Photo by Jeff Goodwin



PUBLISHED BY THE TEXAS SECTION SOCIETY FOR RANGE MANAGEMENT



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



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President's Notes



**Melony Sikes
President, TSSRM**

Range Stewardship is patriotic! In addition to the economic and natural resource sustainability wise range management provides to the landowner, the benefits bring strength to our state and to our country. Healthy rangelands also make Texas beautiful.

Our country needs some good news. The timing may have never been better than right now to write a news article on range stewardship. It is always a pleasure to see practical agricultural stories giving credit to those who take care of the land. It would be great if you could take time to write a good positive article about a range steward this month.

I really enjoyed the International SRM meeting in Albuquerque. There were 1600 registered. Many Texan's were honored and many served in major leadership positions.

Award Winners: Frederick G. Renner Award - Dr. Jerry W. Stuth (Posthumous)
W.R. Chapline Research Award - Dr. Steven G. Whisenant
Outstanding Achievement Award (Stewardship) - Stephen A. Nelle

Outstanding Achievement Award (Stewardship) - Dan Caudle

High School Youth Forum - Robert Buckholtz, 5th high - "Juniper Utilization and Management-it's not so easy"

Undergraduate Plant Identification Contest-Texas A & M University, Second

Steven Goertz - Texas A & M University, high point individual

Kelly Haile - Texas A & M University, 5th high individual

Student Combined Award-Andy James - Texas A & M University

Texas leaders were everywhere: 2008 President G. Allen Rasmussen passed off the gavel after a year of service.

Paul Loeffler used his well-honed parliamentary procedure skills in chairing the Advisory Council.

Hoyt Seidensticker - High School Youth Forum Leader

Don Gohmert - GLCI Task Group Co-Chair

Jenny Pluhar - Director

Dr. Charles Hart - Director

You can read the comprehensive report on all that I just mentioned in the parent society publications. I apologize if I overlooked anyone.

In closing, we have 95.7 million acres of rangelands in Texas so there should be plenty to brag about. There are stories just waiting to be written. How Red, White and Blue are you? We need to applaud rangeland stewardship, sell it, teach it, and share it. If not you, then who? Jump in and make some noise!

Happy Easter!

Melony Sikes

The Inside Story...

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- TAMU Undergraduates Shine at Annual Meeting
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- 2008 TSSRM/TSCRA Outstanding Rangeland Stewardship Award
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- Caudle Receives Award for Stewardship
- Stuth Receives Frederick G. Renner Award
- TSSRM Committees

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TSSRM Annual Meeting

October 7-9 - Beaumont

Hills to Bays, the Impacts are Clear

The Annual Meeting host hotel
is currently accepting reservations.

Holiday Inn Hotel and Suites Beaumont Plaza

**3950 IH-10 South
Beaumont, Texas 77705
Direct Line (409) 842-7808
Fax (409) 842-7844**

TAMU Undergraduates Shine at Annual Meeting

TAMU undergraduates excelled at The Society for Range Management Annual Meeting held in Albuquerque, NM. The Plant Identification Team placed second in competition against 18 universities from the United States, Mexico and Canada. Team members Steven Goertz and Kelly Haile placed first and fifth, respectively, in individual competition. Andy James placed third in a combined award competition of the Plant Identification Contest and the Undergraduate Range Exam Contest. Ten students from TAMU competed in the contests with over 200 students participating.

Caitlin Connell was elected secretary of the Student Conclave, which represents the students from across North America.

Upcoming Events

BOD - Mason Mountain - April 24, 9:00 AM

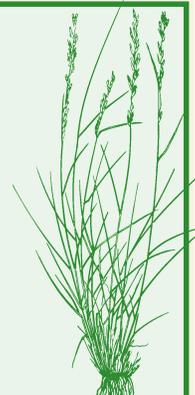
Prairie Restoration Workshop

Cymer Meadow, Celeste, TX - May 29, 2009

**BOD - Mason Mountain
July 14, 9:00 AM**

**BOD - Beaumont
October 6, 5:00 PM**

**TEXAS SECTION ANNUAL MEETING
Beaumont - October 7-9**



Live Oak - *Beautiful and Bountiful*

By Steve Nelle



Spring is upon us, however in the winter across much of Texas, live oak is the only color that blesses the otherwise bleak landscape. Possibly no other kind of tree characterizes Texas any more than live oak. This is especially true for large parts of central Texas and towards the gulf coast where live oak is the most notable of trees. Because of our admiration of this handsome and remarkable tree, many people think that live oak should have been named as the state tree.

Although sometimes referred to as evergreen, live oak drops all of its leaves each year, just like

any other oak. The difference is that live oak retains green leaves all the way through fall and winter. Only as the new leaves begin to emerge in early spring do the old leaves drop, leaving merely a brief period when the tree is naked. This retention of green leaves throughout winter is one of the characteristics that makes live oak such a desirable tree.

Live oak is commonly found in at least three distinct growth forms. The massive, centuries old trees commonly found from San Antonio to the central coast are awesome and majestic in appearance, the pride of many landowners. Some of these ancient trees have a prominent place in Texas history as the location where treaties were signed or as famous landmarks to guide early travelers. Mottes or clusters of medium sized trees are more typical of the shallow limestone soils of the Edwards Plateau. These mottes of 10 to 100 trees presumably share a common root system, having originated from root sprouts of the original tree. "Running live oak" is found in some of the deep sands along the lower gulf coast. This live oak grows as dense thickets composed of interconnected sprouts.

Botanists cannot agree on the scientific classification of live oak. Some claim that there are two separate species, Texas live oak and Southern live oak, both of which occur in Texas. Others say it is all one species with different varieties. Adding to the confusion is the fact that live oak can hybridize with other oaks creating some odd looking trees. For the average landowner and wildlife manager, the exact classification does not really matter.

Regardless of the growth form, live oak is an important plant for people, wildlife and livestock. In the habitat triad of food, cover and water, live oak makes great contributions to each.

More white-tailed deer (as well as goats and exotics) feed more heavily on live oak than any plant species in Texas. It could be argued that the historic abundance of deer in central Texas would never have developed and could not survive in the absence of live oak. The leaves and new twigs provide abundant browse for at least 11 months out of the year. The prolific root-sprouting ability of live oak helps insure that browse on new young plants is available within reach of deer. However, the gross quantity of browse far exceeds the nutritional value of that browse. Crude protein content of live oak leaves is a mere 8 to 10% for most of the year. The energy value, as expressed by TDN (total digestible nutrients) is only 40 to 50%. This level of nutrition will keep deer alive and in reasonable health, but is not adequate for a high level of deer performance. Habitat managers are aware that the new sprouts which emerge after a fire are considerably higher in nutrition. This "browse renovation" is one of the reasons why prescribed burning is becoming a popular habitat improvement technique in live oak country. Deer managers and ranchers understand that the formation of a browse line on live oak is a warning that there are too many deer, goats or exotics on the range.

(continued)



Acorns, when available, provide a huge wind-fall of high energy food that often enables deer and other wildlife to go into winter in good shape. Even a moderate density of live oak can produce 500 to 1000 pounds per acre of acorns. This fact is not lost on hunters who often find that deer are not interested in their corn until the crop of acorns is exhausted.

In addition to the food value, live oak provides good cover, protection and concealment for many kinds of wildlife. This in-

cludes critical roosting sites for turkey, rookery nesting for herons and egrets, perches and nest sites for large raptors and owls, nesting sites for dozens of smaller birds, hollows for cavity dwellers and dense protective cover for deer and many small mammals. In addition, many a sheep and many a cow have laid under the dense cooling shade of live oak while ruminating. Many a cowboy, hunter and early traveler have taken naps there as well.

The role of live oak in the water cycle is sometimes overlooked, but is extremely important in the ecology of the Edwards Plateau. Live oak grows in abundance in the shallow limestone soils of the region, especially in fractured limestone. These deep fractures in the rock provide the most direct access for water to move down into underground aquifers. Studies have shown that the areas beneath a canopy of live oak have the highest infiltration rates of any other kind of vegetation. During heavy rainstorms, live oak areas provide direct conduits to funnel rainfall and runoff deep into the earth where it can be stored.

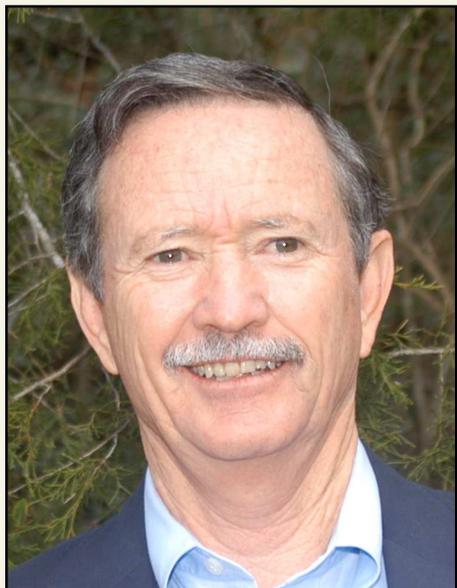


In addition to the utilitarian functions of live oak, it is also a beautiful and artistic part of nature. Countless paintings in countless homes feature landscapes of live oak. Many rural landowners and ranchers protect and revere their live oak with passion.

To the Texas land steward, every plant must earn its keep. If it does not contribute to livestock production or wildlife habitat or soil protection or to a healthy water cycle or to the aesthetic beauty of the land, it must be replaced. Thank heavens, live oak not only earns its keep, but rewards us back with multiplied richness.

Live oak helps make Texas a good place to live.

Whisenant Receives W.R. Chapline Research Award



The W. R. Chapline Research Award was presented to Dr. Steven G. Whisenant, Professor and Head, Department of Ecosystem Science & Management, Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas at the Society for Range Management's 62nd Annual Meeting held in Albuquerque, New Mexico, February 8-13, 2009. This award is presented to recognize exceptional research accomplishments in range science and associated disciplines.

The scientific achievements of Dr. Whisenant are a tribute to his exceptional talents and energy devoted to improvement of rangelands during his 27-year research career. Through his research, his book entitled *Repairing Damaged Wildlands: A Process-oriented Landscape-scale Approach*, and his ability to communicate his knowledge to others, Steve has become recognized worldwide as the authority on ecological restoration of degraded rangelands and other terrestrial ecosystems. He has clearly demonstrated the benefits of working with, rather than against, the natural ecological processes for achieving long-lasting, low-cost, and environmentally friendly ecosystem restoration.

His book is the most widely used ecological restoration book in the world, used as a textbook at universities in at least 21 countries. It is currently being re-printed in the Chinese language. Governments and ecological organizations throughout the world regularly seek Steve out to participate in or lead land restoration research projects, and to present keynote papers at symposia addressing restoration of degraded ecosystems.

Dr. Whisenant has also made very significant contributions in the areas of plant ecology, fire ecology, and weed, woody plant, and invasive plant ecology and management in the US. His contributions to scientific literature includes 1 book, 7 book chapters, 36 papers in scientific journals, and over 25 symposia proceedings. He has made a major contribution to the future of rangeland management and restoration through his teaching at Brigham Young University and Texas A&M University.

Dr. Whisenant's appointment as Head of the Ecosystem Science & Management Department at Texas A&M University and the awards he has received exemplify the quality of his achievements and the esteem he has earned from his colleagues, peers, administrators, and professional societies. Steve has been a devoted member of SRM for 34 years. He has served on numerous committees and as an Associate Editor of the *Journal of Range Management*. He is a member of the Board of Directors of the Society for Ecological Restoration International.

It was with great honor that the Society for Range Management presented Dr. Steven G Whisenant with the Society's 2009 W. R. Chapline Research Award.

2008 TSSRM/TSCRA Outstanding Rangeland Stewardship Award Recipient



Taylor Yeates and the Leeray Ranch of Breckenridge, Texas, were recently recognized at the Texas and Southwestern Cattle Raisers Association Annual Convention in Fort Worth, Texas.

Nelle Receives Outstanding Achievement Award for Stewardship



Stephen A. Nelle of San Angelo, Texas, received the Outstanding Achievement Award for Stewardship at the Society for Range Management's (SRM) 62nd Annual Meeting held in Albuquerque, New Mexico, February 8-13, 2009. The Outstanding Achievement Award is presented by the Society for Range Management for outstanding achievement to members and other qualified individuals and groups working with rangelands.

Steve Nelle is the rangeland professional's model for a lifetime dedicated to stewardship. Author, communicator, trainer, mentor, equally respected by peers and rangeland users alike, Steve has spent a lifetime making a mark upon the land.

Steve's career with NRCS spans thirty-five years over most of the State of Texas. Steve has presented papers at national and section meetings of the Society for Range Management, The Wildlife Society, and Rancher and Wildlife Symposiums on a wide range of topics. As an author, Steve has written "*Riparian Notes*", a monthly newsletter with statewide distribution to environmental groups, river authorities, state and federal agencies, and private individuals. He is the sole author of the NRCS publication *The Use and Management of Browse in the Edwards Plateau of Texas*. This booklet, along with excellent color photographs, discusses all aspects of browse management, and the implications of good and poor management. Steve was also editor of the nationally recognized Texas Section SRM newsletter for which he received two national awards and the Section Fellow Award.

Steve's forte is as a communicator and his strength is his ability to relate to both professionals and the ranching public. Steve has both the confidence and respect of his peers and the ranchers to whom he "sells" conservation.

Steve Nelle is widely recognized by the ranching community, academia, professionals in the range and wildlife community, and many others as a consummate professional. Steve's heart is for the land, his tracks are on the land, and the impact of his work will be reflected in the land for many, many years.

Caudle Receives Outstanding Achievement Award for Stewardship



Dan M. Caudle of Weatherford, Texas, received the Outstanding Achievement Award for Stewardship at the Society for Range Management's (SRM) 62nd Annual Meeting held in Albuquerque, New Mexico, February 8-13, 2009. The Outstanding Achievement Award is presented by the Society for Range Management for outstanding achievement to members and other qualified individuals and groups working with rangelands.

Dan Caudle has been contributing to rangeland management since he graduated from Texas Tech University in 1970. He has been a very active member of the SRM since 1972.

He retired with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service on December 31, 2006 after more than 39 years of service. He was a member of the Ecological site design team from 1992 to 2006 where he made substantial contributions that benefited the whole nation. Dan was the South Central Region Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative (GLCI) Coordinator from 1995 to 2004. He made many contributions in that capacity that benefited the entire nation. In 2006 Dan was recognized as the NRCS Rangeland Conservationist of the Year.

From Texas to Wisconsin and beyond, Dan Caudle has been a valuable asset to the rangeland profession. For over three decades, he has been called upon by universities, organiza-

tions, agencies and private landowners to share his knowledge and expertise on rangeland management issues.

Through DMC Natural Resources Management, he provides natural resources management services as a consultant, technical advisor, and independent contractor for individuals, company's agencies and organizations.

Dan has been a leader in the field of rangeland conservation throughout his entire career. He has given the majority of his time and all of his heart to the great cause of promoting rangeland management both in his career and through his service to the Society for Range Management since 1972. For all that he has done for the SRM and the profession of range management, Dan Caudle is well deserving of this award.

Stuth Receives Frederic G. Renner Award



Dr. Jerry Stuth, College Station, Texas, received the Fredric G. Renner Award posthumously at the Society for Range Management's 62nd Annual Meeting held in Albuquerque, New Mexico, February 8-13, 2009. The Renner Award is the most prestigious award bestowed by the Society. It was made possible by a generous contribution from Frederic G. Renner, a Charter and Life member, and SRM's second President (1949). The award is presented with the belief that such recognition will foster better use of rangeland resources and a broader understanding of the contributions that these resources make to the welfare of all people.

Dr. Stuth's contributions to the range management profession are enormous as demonstrated by his chairing of over 60 MS and Ph.D. graduate committees, teaching 2000+ undergraduate and graduate students in an array of rangeland management courses, authoring or co-authoring 92 refereed journal articles, 24 books and book chapters, 90 proceedings, 27 agency publications, and 11 software user's guides, developing 22 software programs; all while garnering and administering over \$35,000,000 in grant monies. More specifically, Jerry was recognized nationally and internationally as a leader in the development and application of information technology for use

in the management of rangeland ecosystems. The following is a brief listing of his many research accomplishments.

- Jerry led a team that developed a computerized grazinglands planning system whose subsequent refinement resulted in the Grazingland Spatial Analysis Tool (GSAT), software used extensively by NRCS as a planning tool.
- Dr. Stuth developed an array of technologies for managing the nutritional well-being of free-ranging livestock. The foundation of these technologies was the development of methodology to estimate diet quality of free-ranging livestock via analyses of fecal material using near infrared reflectance spectrophotometer technology.
- Jerry developed the first livestock early warning system (LEWS) that forecasts impending forage shortfalls 90 days in advance. Originally developed for East Africa, LEWS is now used in many of the world's arid regions.
- Dr. Stuth led the team that developed the Forage Risk Assessment Management System (FRAMS), the first on-ranch system that synthesizes weather, forage conditions, and grazing data to provide biological and economic feedback for timely stocking rate adjustments.
- Jerry conducted a pioneering feasibility study for the USDA Risk Management Agency (RMA) for establishing a forage loss insurance program for grazingland enterprises.
- Via RMA funding, Dr. Stuth participated in the development of the first grazingland real-time Burning Risk Assessment Support System targeting private grazinglands.
- Jerry was a member of the team that founded the Department of Homeland Security's National Foreign Animal and Zoonotic Disease (FAZD) Defense Center housed at Texas A&M University. He was named science leader for Information, Modeling and Analysis for the Center and led a team of 11 scientists from six US Universities.

Because of Dr. Stuth's many accomplishments, it is an honor for the Society for Range Management to present the 2009 Renner Award posthumously to his wife Nadine. May God bless Jerry's memory and his work, family, colleagues, and many, many friends.

It was with great honor that the Society for Range Management presented Dr. Jerry Stuth with the Society's 2009 Fredric G. Renner Award.

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