

# DOCK LINE

MAGAZINE

Magnolia

September 2020



MISTER ROBERT'S  
**RUSTIC  
RAREHOUSE**

## Ain't Nothing Like the Real Thing

Why Rustic Rarehouse is one of the only places to  
still get "real" rustic furniture. *See page 8*

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### SJRA Receives Two Industry Excellence Awards

*See Page 18*

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SEPTEMBER 2020



Well, as we enter into September it is safe to say nothing much has changed from the summer months. We are continuing on the road of uncharted territory as we move through another month of 2020, which means we are continuing to learn what new normal behaviors are excepted of us with changing variables on a daily basis and it gets to be a bit confusing. Nobody seems to know what normal even looks like anymore. Here at Dock Line we will continue to be here to support our community, since now more than ever our community needs all of our support. As we continue to navigate the new waters of this ever changing year, just know here in Texas we will still have a few more beach days and cookouts but there will also be social distancing, smaller gatherings and a crazy school year kick off. Our new normal is anything but normal. It is true our vocabulary has changed but throughout it all, the message remains the same. We are a community of resilience, compassion and generosity. It has become apparent what a great community in which we live in. We encourage everyone to take a look around, celebrate the little things and support your local businesses. They need your support now as we all struggle to get through this unprecedented time. If we all stick together we will be stronger than ever. Until next month, be kind and stay safe...

Bentley & Ellie 

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### ON THE COVER



*It all started with a garage sale. "I found myself over the weekend in the used furniture business" said Bob Way. If you love (real) rustic furniture come visit Rustic Rarehouse at the original location at 13782 TX-105, Conroe, TX 77304 or the new Room Store location at 13080 TX-105 W, Conroe, TX 77304. Learn more online at [www.rusticrarehouse.com](http://www.rusticrarehouse.com) or call at (936) 588-2771.*

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**PUBLISHER/EDITOR**

Bentley/Ellie  
**MANAGING EDITORS**

Kelly L. O'Quinn  
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David Donahoo, Colton Rucker  
**SEO SPECIALISTS**

Stephanie Davis  
**SALES ASSOCIATE**

Brian Sherman  
Matthew Calhoun  
**WRITERS**

Jessie Smith  
**PHOTOGRAPHER**

**CONTRIBUTORS:**

James M. Bright  
Dr. Lindsey Thomas, DC  
Chris Wootton, ChFC  
Gary Squyres, DDS  
Bronwyn Clear • Lisa Wolling  
Tom Stark, MD  
Alice Best  
Kay L. Lee

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Fax: 936-307-1300  
E-mail: [angela@docklinemagazine.com](mailto:angela@docklinemagazine.com)

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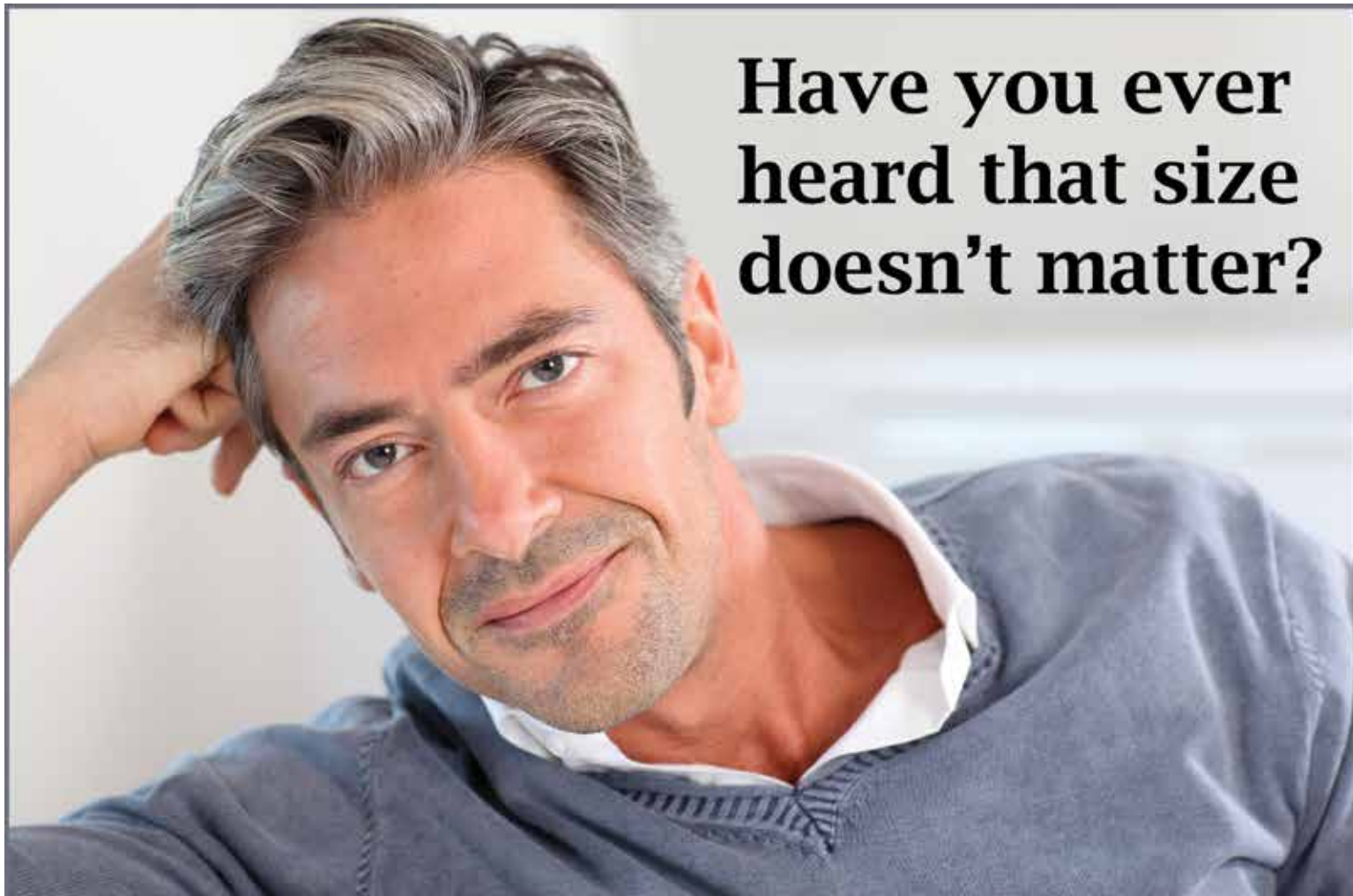
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## Ain't Nothing Like the Real Thing

*Why Rustic Rarehouse is one of the only places to still get "real" rustic furniture.*

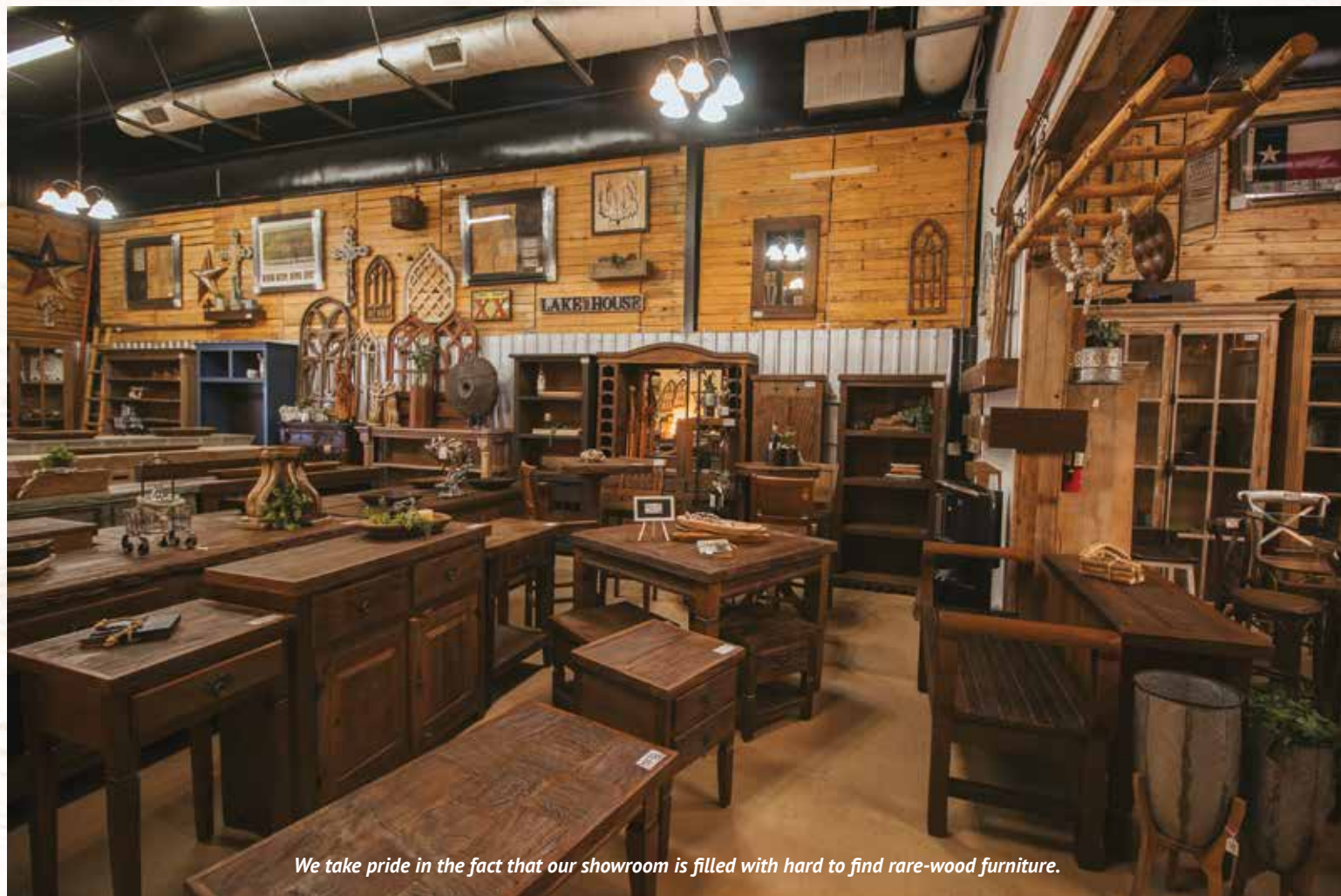
BY: BRIAN SHERMAN



Rustic furniture has been a popular style choice for Americans for over 200 years. Pioneers lived off the land and used what they found in nature to build homes and make furniture. Rustic furniture was born out of necessity, but through the years the simple, raw, and rugged style has become a favorite for just about everyone. Now the rustic style has morphed into variations like rustic chic, modern rustic, farmhouse, and many other popular styles. While the look speaks volumes, rustic furniture has always been known for its rugged durability as well.

However, somewhere in the journey of popularization, rustic furniture began to drift from its original nature.

Now, most rustic furniture found in big name stores is rustic only in appearance. It seems that true rustic furniture is a thing of the past as furniture producers have chosen cheaper materials and higher profit margins over craftsmanship and quality components. Sure, you can sometimes find the “real” stuff hidden in high-end furniture stores or antiques shops, but rarely do you find establishments that know



*We take pride in the fact that our showroom is filled with hard to find rare-wood furniture.*



rustic, offer a wide variety of pieces made of the right stuff, and don't charge an arm and a leg for it. That is, except for Rustic Rarehouse.

The local favorite furniture store has been offering the “real thing” for some time now. While the days of using beautiful rare woods has faded into the overuse of cheap woods like Mexican Pine, Rustic Rarehouse fills its showroom with rare-wood furniture that's hard to find almost anywhere else.

What you won't find, though, are inflated prices.

“Most rustic stores specialize in Mexican Pine,” says Bob. “I go out of my way to offer the opposite. Most of our selection is going to be mango wood, teak, or Peroba Rosa from Brazil - some kind of hardwood. If you do find the same items, they're usually in a high-end store at double or triple the price I sell it for.” Don't just take Bob's word for it either. “Smart, savvy customers who shop around come in all the time

and tell us how great our prices are.”

As one happy customer had to say, “Love this place. Awesome selection of beautiful rustic furniture, art, mixed pieces and more. New items very often. Excellent prices. Great service. Prompt delivery. Stop by and you will not be disappointed!!!” - Jerry G.

### **The Story of Rustic Rarehouse**

Rustic Rarehouse's unique history makes them a little different from other furniture stores. Owner Bob Way has been restoring and selling all kinds of furniture for 25 years. It all started years ago when he needed to pay a bill and decided to have a garage sale to make some extra money. Rather than paying that bill with the extra money he made, he went to an auction and bought some more items to sell in another garage sale, including furniture. “I

*Continued on page 10* ➞

found myself over the weekend in the used furniture business,” says Bob. “And that was better than a job.”

A true entrepreneur at heart, Bob Way began to expand his knowledge of furniture and sell nicer and nicer furniture. Starting from second hand furniture and through years of upgrading inventory, he discovered English antiques. Eventually, by 2012 he was specialized in fine European antiques from many sources, including private importers and auctioneers.

In late 2012, Bob realized that the market had shifted and he knew where to get “the good stuff” - the rustic, distressed and reclaimed real-wood furniture that people love the most.

### **Man Cave and Industrial? Or Family Friendly? Now Two Locations**

Now, Rustic Rarehouse has grown in popularity so much that they have expanded to two locations. At the original location on Highway 105 you’ll find all the rustic furniture you’ll need to outfit a man cave, plus a huge selection



*At our second location - beautiful beds, impressive dining sets and more.*

of industrial style furniture - a growing favorite for many homeowners. In the newest location just a half mile down the road, you’ll find a more family oriented approach to furniture se-

lection. Beautiful beds, impressive solid-wood dining tables, stylish rustic TV stands, and so much more. Bob knows exactly what his customers love the most and always finds a way

to fill his store with styles that fly off the showroom floor.

“Everything in here is solid wood, usually some kind of hardwood,” says Bob as we look over the new showroom floor at the newest location. When asked what the most popular furniture piece is, Bob has a somewhat surprising answer. “TV stands,” he says as he points to a gorgeous farmhouse style example. “It’s what you see more than any other furniture piece,” he explains about why they are so popular. With the evolution of the TV, the evolution of living room and bedroom furniture has followed suit.

### **Rare Woods - What Makes Rustic the Real Thing**

Rustic Rarehouse is exactly that - a rare wood warehouse. As Bob explained, most rustic furniture nowadays is made out of Mexican Pine, a softer wood that is cheap and abundantly available. While that furniture looks attractive, it is rustic in style only. Most manufacturers have moved away from the rare hardwoods that used to give rustic furniture so much character.

Rustic Rarehouse, on the other hand, is full of beautiful rare hardwood furniture that is nearly impossible to find anywhere else - at least, without spending an arm and a leg. You’ll





find solid mango, teak, elm, rosewood, and many others, including the rare Peroba Rosa.

#### Peroba Rosa

Now considered a rare wood, the Brazilian hardwood is difficult to find in the US. In fact, Rustic Rarehouse's supplier only works with four retailers in the states. Bob understands what his customers love so well that he is the only carrier in America of a specific color of Peroba Rosa, a beautiful dark caramel shade



that you have to see for yourself.

#### Current Events and Rustic Rarehouse's Future

Like most retail businesses, Rustic Rarehouse saw an initial drop in business when the coronavirus outbreak began. However, as people adjusted to the current state of life, customers started coming back to the store. One thing that Bob Way and his team have discovered is that offering a product and service that you can't find anywhere else, along with a consistently high value for the money is one way

to guarantee that a business will survive and thrive during uncertain times.

If you love (real) rustic furniture come visit Rustic Rarehouse at the original location at 13782 TX-105, Conroe, TX 77304 or the new Room Store location at 13080 TX-105 W, Conroe, TX 77304. Both locations are open Wednesday - Saturday: 10am - 6pm, Sunday: 11am - 5pm and closed on Monday and Tuesday. Learn more online at [www.rusticrarehouse.com](http://www.rusticrarehouse.com) or call at (936) 588-2771. ♦



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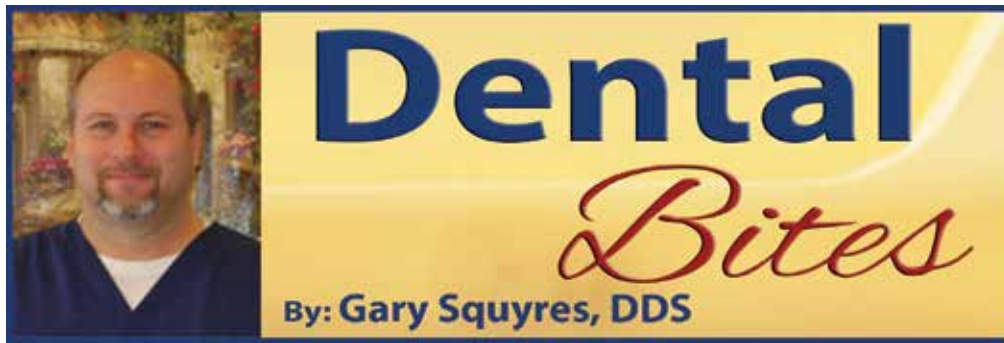
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## Oral Hygiene and Severity of COVID-19 – The Connection

I came across the article “Oral Hygiene and Severity of COVID-19” a couple of days ago that was recently written by Dr. Ananya Mandal, M.D. Dr. Mandal discusses a study that was published in the latest issue of the British Dental Journal by a group of researchers in England. What caught my interest was that she stated that British researchers have found a link between poor oral hygiene and severity of COVID-19 disease caused by severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) infection. I have listed the highlights of her article as follows:

Researchers to date have identified several risk factors that are associated with severe COVID-19 course of disease and outcome. While

many patients infected with the virus recover without complications, some may need hospitalization, oxygen supplementation, and even ventilation. Some of the risk factors associated with poor outcome of the disease include high blood pressure, diabetes, obesity, and heart disease. They wrote that the main complications of COVID-19 include “blood clots, pneumonia, sepsis, septic shock, and ARDS (Acute respiratory distress syndrome).” These complications are seen mainly among those with comorbidities and bacterial overload, they wrote.

This study explored the complications of COVID-19 seen among those with poor oral health and periodontal disease. The oral microbiome or the microbial flora of the mouth was

explored and its connection with the COVID-19 outcome was analyzed. The authors wrote, “We explore the connection between high bacterial load in the mouth and post-viral complications, and how improving oral health may reduce the risk of complications from COVID-19.”

The authors of the study wrote that during lung infection, there is a risk of aspirating the oral secretions into the lungs, which could cause infection. Some of the bacteria present in the mouth that could cause such infections include “*Porphyromonas gingivalis*, *Fusobacterium nucleatum*, *Prevotella intermedia*,” they wrote. They explained that periodontitis or infection of the gums is one of the most prevalent causes of harmful bacteria in the mouth. These bacteria lead to the formation of cytokines such as Interleukin 1 (IL1) and Tumor necrosis factor (TNF), which can be detected in the saliva and can reach the lungs leading to infection within them. Thus, the researchers



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wrote, "inadequate oral hygiene can increase the risk of inter-bacterial exchanges between the lungs and the mouth, increasing the risk of respiratory infections and potentially post-viral bacterial complications."

The team wrote, "Good oral hygiene has been recognized as a means to prevent airway infections in patients, especially in those over the age of 70". Those with periodontal disease are at a 25 percent raised risk of heart disease, thrice the risk of getting diabetes, and 20 percent raised risk of getting high blood pressure, the researchers wrote. These are all risk factors of severe COVID-19 they wrote.

This study concludes that 20 percent of the patients with COVID-19 progress to severe illness with high levels of "inflammatory markers (IL-2, IL-6, IL-10), bacteria, and neutrophil-to-lymphocyte count". They noted that the oral microbial environment and COVID-19 could be linked. The four essential risk factors for severe COVID-19 (diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease, and obesity) are also associated with poor oral hygiene, they wrote. They recommend "oral hygiene be maintained, if not improved, during a SARS-CoV-2 infection in order to reduce the bacterial load in the mouth and the potential risk of bacterial superinfection." These precautions are particularly important for those with diabetes, heart disease and hypertension, they wrote. ♦



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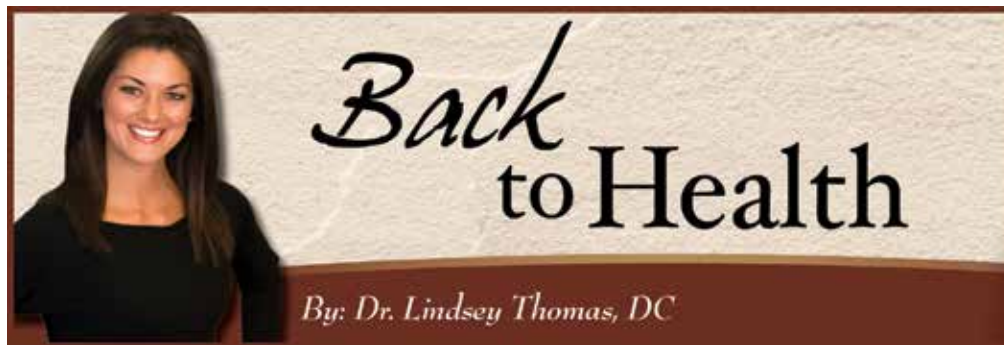
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## Chiropractic: A Winning Approach For Your Child Athlete

As the start of new school year begins, more and more children will be engaging in a variety of sports-related activities. Along with these activities comes the danger of injuries.

A “ding” may be more serious than expected. After a “ding” on the field, shook-up athletes may sit on the sidelines for a little while, then, if they look okay, they often go back into the game.

According to the National Safe Kids Campaign, more than 30 million children participate in organized sports in the US. Even more kids participate in recreational activities such as bicycling, in-line skating, skateboarding and riding scooters. Approximately 775,000 children are treated in hospital emergency rooms for sports related injuries, and about 25 percent of those injuries are considered serious.

Injuries to children's spines are not unique

in little league to the world-class athlete, rely on chiropractic care to assist in the body's natural healing processes and to optimize overall function. The nervous system is the master control system of the entire body. Spinal imbalances, caused by athletic demands and injury have negative effects on normal muscle and organ function.

Athletes count on the function of their bodies to help them perform at peak levels. Studies

have shown that athletes who receive regular chiropractic adjustments react faster, execute fine movements with improved accuracy and precision, and have better co-ordination, all in all, amounting to an overall better athlete. It's not just simply based on size and strength.

Head impacts as experienced in football or martial arts, or from falling on the child's feet or buttocks as in gymnastics or cheerleading lead to minor mis-

alignments of the spine, or “vertebral subluxations”. Subluxations cause nerve interference and weaken the entire structure of the spine. Athletic training can often jar and misalign the spinal column because the spine is at the center of the body. Impact to the legs, feet, head, shoulders and torso often radiates to the spine.

The nervous system controls every activity in the body by sending and receiving nerve messages and is protected by the bones or vertebra of the spine. When the spine is in its ideal structural position, the nerves are protected and optimal communication exists between the nervous system and the rest of the body. The vertebra of the spine are susceptible to certain stresses and forces, which can cause them to lose their proper position.

Whether your children are participating in



contact or non-contact sports, a proper chiropractic evaluation by a qualified chiropractor can keep them in the game and help to minimize if not prevent injuries.

Elite athletes recognize the importance of a subluxation-free body for maximum performance and health. Your children deserve the best as well. Whether your children participate in sport activity for fun or are part of the athletic world for competition, regular chiropractic care for healing and athletic performance are a winning combination! ♦

*“The best way to use Chiropractic is not only after injuries, but before they occur.”*

**–Arnold Schwarzenegger, 7 time Mr. Olympia**



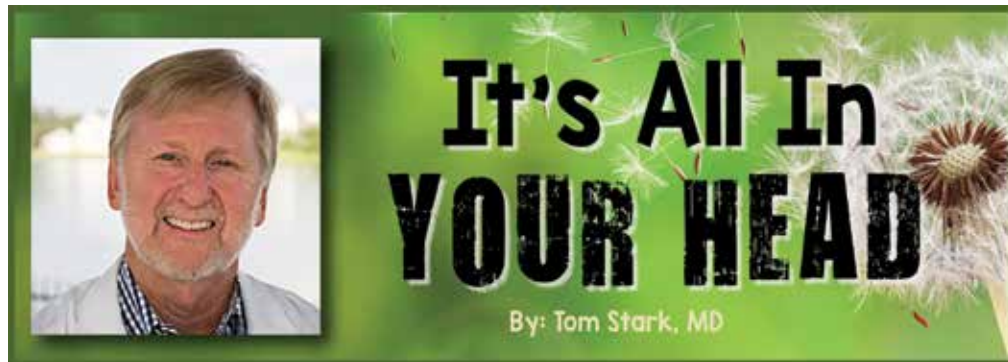
to contact sports like football or martial arts. They are also seen in non-contact sports like gymnastics and competitive cheerleading. Injuries to the pediatric spine vary according to the specific mechanism of injury.

Remember your young athlete is NOT a mini adult athlete! Girls grow until about age 18 and boys grow until about age 21. This means they still have a lot of cartilage and growth plates where their bones have not fused together yet.

Athletic performance and chiropractic go hand and hand. At Sandstone Chiropractic we have doctors that specialize in sports and pediatrics. Athletes of all types, from the youngster

### Along with chiropractic care, here are some other tips for keeping your child athlete healthy and injury free:

- Wear the proper equipment
- Eat healthy meals
- Drink water
- Avoid sugar-loaded, caffeinated and carbonated drinks
- Follow a warm-up routine
- Take vitamins daily: A multi-vitamin and Vitamin C are good choices for the young athlete. Vitamin B and amino acids may help reduce the pain from contact sports. Thiamine can help promote healing. Also consider Vitamin A to strengthen scar tissue.
- Get plenty of rest.



## AN UPDATE ON OUR OFFICE AND HEARING CARE

Those of you who have read my short articles in the past know that I have placed a strong emphasis on preservation of hearing. The importance of hearing for our overall well being cannot be over emphasized. The ability to hear our family and friends keeps us connected in the world. Multiple medical studies have shown that hearing loss in elderly people leads to isolation and can contribute to onset of dementia. I have found that some other ENT practices focus only on other areas such as nasal and sinus problems and do not put equal emphasis on the ear problems and hearing issues.

I am very pleased to announce that Janet Wilson, Dr. of Audiology has joined my practice. Janet has extensive experience in the field of audiology including diagnostic testing and of course proper fitting of hearing aids. She originally did her extensive training and education in Wisconsin. She moved to Texas in 2013 and worked for a group of ENT specialists in College Station until December 2017. From January 2018 until just



now she was the dispensing audiologist at Connect Hearing just down the road from my office on Highway 105 in Montgomery. She was very well liked and respected there and many of her patients will be happy to know that she has not left the area.

Many of you who have been to my office know that I personally have a hearing loss and have been wearing hearing aids for approximately 6 years now. In my teenage years (which was unfortunately a long long time ago) my favorite sporting activity was shot gun shooting. I have very fond memories of dove hunting in South Texas with my late father and late uncle, Dr. Tom Stark of Beeville, Texas. But at that time in the 1960s none of us wore any type of hearing protection. Because of that I have similar problems to many others in my age group, hearing loss with difficulty understanding speech especially in crowded environments such as restaurants.

I am excited that Dr. Wilson has joined our practice and know that she can provide excellence in diagnosis and treatment of hearing disorders. ♦

### Are hearing issues keeping you from the things you love?



  
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# SJRA Receives Two Industry Excellence Awards



*Congratulations SJRA! Special thank you to all of our employees for effort, devotion, and commitment to providing first class, uninterrupted services to our communities. Our employees are our greatest asset.*

This year, the San Jacinto River Authority (SJRA) had the honor of receiving multiple awards at Texas Water 2020-the largest regional water conference in the U.S. The awards were the Watermark Award and the Wastewater Treatment Plant of the year award.

## Know Your Watershed

SJRA received the Watermark Award for the Know Your Watershed educational campaign. The campaign was created to help residents of the San Jacinto River Basin identify their watershed, understand the San Jacinto River basin as a whole, and learn how water naturally drains throughout the region, while also providing

important water-related facts. Armed with the information on this website, residents will be able to understand how their property is being impacted by a given rainfall event by monitoring regional rainfall and stream gages from the SJRA and Harris County Flood Control District websites.

The Watermark Award for communications excellence recognizes Texas Section - American Water Works Association (AWWA) and Water Environment Association of Texas (WEAT) members who have produced top quality communications. Effective internal and external communication is essential to a member's ability to provide excellent service. Today's water resource professionals must communicate with a variety of audiences to achieve success. Through these awards, Texas Section AWWA and WEAT hope to heighten awareness among all water resource professionals about the importance of effective communication.

Texas Water 2020 held a virtual Watermark Award Reception on Friday, July 17th. The event was broadcast live on Facebook.

## Wastewater Treatment Plants (WWTP) #2 and #3

Additionally, SJRA's Woodlands Division WWTP #2 and #3 received the WWTP of the Year award from WEAT in each of their designated categories. This award is presented to a WWTP in Texas that has consistently showed

outstanding performance of daily activities beyond the normal call of duty.

WEAT held a virtual award ceremony on July 10th to congratulate the winners of this year's award. SJRA is very proud of the hard work and dedication of our staff at the Woodlands Division which is working 24/7, 365 days to serve the community and ensure superior wastewater treatment.

For more information on WEAT and their awards, visit their website at <https://www.weat.org/>, like them on Facebook at The Water Environment Association of Texas and follow them on Twitter @WaterEnvAssnTX.

For information on AWWA, visit their website at <https://www.awwa.org/>, like them on Facebook at American Water Works Association and follow them on Twitter @awwa.

One of the major river authorities in Texas, SJRA's mission is to develop, conserve, and protect the water resources of the San Jacinto River basin. Covering all or part of seven counties, the organization's jurisdiction includes the entire San Jacinto River watershed, excluding Harris County. For additional information on SJRA visit our website at [www.sjra.net](http://www.sjra.net), like SJRA on Facebook @SanJacintoRiverAuthority, follow us on Twitter @SJRA\_1937, or find us on Instagram @SanJacintoRiverAuthoritySJRA, or connect with us on LinkedIn @San Jacinto River Authority. ♦





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# Understanding the Roth IRA **5** Year **RULE**

Tax rates, whether you realize or not, are some of the lowest in decades. If you believe what I believe, that taxes are headed up in the future, the Roth IRA is one of the best tax planning vehicles currently available.

Whether you're young and just getting started with retirement savings or closing in on your retirement years, the Roth can be beneficial to you and to heirs if used properly and in the right proportions in a personalized financial plan.

According to the Investment Company Institute and Plan Sponsor Council of America in 2019, only 19% of U.S. households owned a Roth IRA and only 36% of those owners contributed in 2018. It's a little better on the employer plan front with 69% of employers offering a Roth 401(k) option in 2018 but only 23% of eligible employees contributing to them in that same year.

This unfortunately underscores the tax problem that so many will be facing in retirement as they have over-stuffed pre-tax accounts and find themselves with little to no tax flexibility. Pay now or pay later, but make no mistake, you will pay. The question will be, how much?

However, when utilizing a Roth IRA there are rules. Follow the rules and you'll be on your way to better tax efficiency in retirement and avoid the pitfalls many fall into when using these vehicles.

One of the least understood "rules of the Roth" is the "five-year rule". It typically refers to when you can take tax-free distributions of earnings from your Roth IRA, Roth 401(k), or other work-based Roth account. The rule states that you must wait five years after making your first contribution, and the distribution must take place after age 59½, when you become disabled, or when your beneficiaries inherit the assets after your death. Roth IRAs (but not workplace plans) also permit up to a \$10,000 tax-free withdrawal of earnings after five years for a first-time home purchase.

While this seems straightforward, several nuances may affect your distribution's

tax status. Here are four questions that examine some of them.

## 1. When does the clock start ticking?

"Five-year rule" is a bit misleading; in some cases, the waiting period may be shorter. The countdown begins on January 1 of the tax year for which you make your first contribution.

For example, if you open a Roth IRA on December 31, 2020, the clock starts on January 1, 2020, and ends on January 1, 2025 — four years and one day after making your first contribution. Even if you wait until April 15, 2021, to make your contribution for tax year 2020, the clock starts on January 1, 2020.

## 2. Does the five-year rule apply to every account?

For Roth IRAs, the five-year clock starts ticking when you make your first contribution to any Roth IRA.

With employer plans, each account you own is subject to a separate five-year rule. However, if you roll assets from a former employer's 401(k) plan into your current Roth 401(k), the clock depends on when you made the first contribution to your former account. For instance, if you first contributed to your former Roth 401(k) in 2014, and in 2020 you rolled those assets into your new plan, the new account meets the five-year requirement.

## 3. What if you roll over from a Roth 401(k) to a Roth IRA?

Proceed with caution here. If you have never previously contributed to a Roth IRA, the clock resets when you roll money into the Roth IRA, regardless of how long the money has been in your Roth 401(k). Therefore, if you think you might enact a Roth 401(k) rollover sometime in the future, consider opening a Roth IRA as soon as possible. The five-year clock starts ticking as soon as you make your first contribution, even if it's just the minimum amount and you don't contribute again until you roll over the assets.<sup>1</sup>



## 4. What if you convert from a traditional IRA to a Roth IRA?

In this case, a different five-year rule applies. When you convert funds in a traditional IRA to a Roth IRA, you'll have to pay income taxes on deductible contributions and tax-deferred earnings in the year of the conversion. If you withdraw any of the converted assets within five years, a 10% early-distribution penalty may apply, unless you have reached age 59½ or qualify for another exception. This rule also applies to conversions from employer plans.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> You may also leave the money in your former employer's plan, roll the money into another employer's Roth account, or receive a lump-sum distribution. Income taxes and a 10% penalty tax may apply to the taxable portion of the distribution if it is not qualified.

<sup>2</sup> Withdrawals that meet the definition of a "coronavirus-related distribution" during 2020 are exempt from the 10% penalty.



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# Online with Dock Line

## How to Start a Podcast in 2020

Starting a podcast in 2020 is a lot easier than it was a couple of years ago. Equipment is easier to use and cheaper to come by. However, that's not to say that there aren't a couple of learning curves when it comes to starting a podcast. Although the field may be less crowded than the blogging sphere, there are over 800,000 podcast shows and will soon be in the millions. If you are going to start a podcast in 2020 you'll need to up your game to be noticed even with a captive audience. Starting a podcast can be daunting, but it doesn't have to be. You can launch a podcast for your business or as a hobby. You should know that the average podcast takes time to build an audience. It's time to mix your creative side with the marketing side.

### Picking Your Topic and Niche

Before you start buying equipment and scheduling podcast episodes, you are going to want to know what to talk about. Defining the topic and niche of your podcast is critical to growing and building your audience. Answer questions for yourself like:

1. What are your interests?
2. Is this just a hobby or do you want to eventually start a business with this podcast?
3. Which interest of yours would you like to further explore? Do you want to become an expert in that interest or a casual observer?
4. Do you want your podcasting to be dependent on a product or service? For example, movie reviews or political news? Going down this route may mean that your content needs to be extremely relevant or target specific niches. Meaning you'll have to keep up with timely movies and news or be very specific in who you cover. For example, you only review horror films from the 1960s or your podcast is over the rise and end of the Vietnam War covering multiple angles. The downsides of covering relevant reviews or movies is that you are always dependent on content from other sources and that content can be worthwhile or not.
5. Do you want your topic to have clearly definable facts to base itself off of? For example, a Supreme Court ruling. This is different from talking about a topic like Buddhism vs. Christianity. This is also different from talking about personal taste, i.e. ranking the albums of a classic rock band. These decisions all affect workload as you'll need to gather more information and establish yourself as trustworthy to your audience. Try brainstorming ideas that you are interested in using brainstorming techniques.

Spend some time on this process, as clearly knowing what you are

going to talk about can help guide the format, duration, and production process of your show. Defining topics and niche can also help you discern whether you need a co-host or not when you start a podcast in 2020.

### Recording and Preparing Your Podcast For Launch

So you've narrowed down your topic, figured out your niche audience, and have a format for your podcast. Great! Now it's time to get to recording. If you never have tried to record a podcast or worked with microphones, you DO NOT need to spend hundreds of dollars on a microphone. Quite frankly, you need to keep your investment low as a first-timer. There is a very real possibility you don't have the right set-up for an expensive microphone and you may always quit podcasting. If that happens, you're stuck with a \$300 dollar paperweight that isn't benefiting you any. Some common items you may need for a podcast setup include:

- Computer
- Recording Software
- Microphone
- Pop Filter
- Boom Arm
- Isolation Box
- Headphones
- Audio Interface
- Mixer





Some of these items are optional or not necessary depending on your set-up. When starting out, try to keep your set significantly smaller and easy to operate. The last thing you want is to have a very technical process of recording as that can kill your enthusiasm for an episode. Do your research before buying any product and make sure it is absolutely necessary that you buy the item. Be creative, with the right treatment to a room you can even record a podcast with a voice recorder.

#### Where to Host Your Podcast

So, you've recorded the first couple of episodes of your podcast. You've edited them in your software. Now you're ready to upload to iTunes, except, you can't actually upload your podcast straight to iTunes or Spotify directly from your computer. iTunes and other podcasting apps need an RSS feed submitted to them. An RSS feed can come from two places, either a website or an audio host. To get started, you just need an audio host and can later transition to building a website.

#### What is an Audio Host, though?

An audio host is an online platform that houses all of your audio and syndicates it through an RSS feed. It makes it easy to upload and submit your podcast to iTunes, Spotify, etc. They usually will run you around \$20 dollars, although there are some free options. Select an audio host that has in-depth analytics about your podcast. It should monitor things like downloads, playing time, what country your podcast is getting the most downloads, and more.

#### Submit Your Podcast to iTunes and Spotify

Once you have recorded your podcast, edited them, picked an audio host, and uploaded an episode, now is the time to submit to iTunes and Spotify. This is a fairly simple process, and you'll want to submit to these podcast directories because these are the biggest platforms available. Uploading to these platforms gives you instant access to millions of listeners around the world. Try making a list of specific people on your friend's list to share the podcast with. Also, when you post your first episode on social media try to write engaging headlines about the episode or who is involved. Really sell yourself and your work, and position yourself as a content provider. What would make a potential listener's ears perk up? Start a podcast off right with having a couple of marketing tactics to get noticed. This will help get you on the new and noteworthy page which will grab you a sizable subscriber base to start with.

So, do you have a passion that you love learning about? Are you an expert about something that you could help others get better at? Do you have a hobby that you spend a lot of time on? If you have something valuable to share with the world and are willing to devote a few years to share it, then yes, you can and should start a podcast. If you want to start a podcast in 2020 and need a more in-depth resource we have you covered! At Dock Line Magazine, we have compiled a comprehensive guide (over 12k words) on starting a podcast. We go in-depth about planning and buying equipment as well as picking an audio host. Contact us today to find out more! ♦

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# Great Veteran Home Loan Rates

Eligible Texas Veterans and Military Members have an opportunity to purchase a home with a competitive, low-interest loan with little or no down payment. Veterans, Military Members and their spouses may receive up to \$510,400 on a fixed-rate loan for 15, 20, 25 or 30 year terms\*. Veterans with a VA service-connected disability rating of 30% or greater qualify for a discounted interest rate.

Home Loan base rate **2.89%** and discounted rate **2.39%**

## REQUIREMENTS

To qualify, homes must meet the following requirements:

- The home must be the Veteran or Military Member's primary residence in Texas.
- The home must be a single family attached or detached home, townhome or condominium.
- Duplexes or other multi-family units must have been constructed at least five years prior to the closing date of the loan.
- New homes must have either ENERGY STAR certification or HERS Index score of 75 or less.

The home must remain the Veteran or Military Member's primary residence for at least three years, and the Veteran or Military Member borrower must occupy the home within 60 days after loan closing.

The VLB does not offer to refinance. If you have an existing loan on your home, the VLB cannot provide refinancing to lower your interest rate, nor can the VLB Veterans Housing Assistance Program be used for a down payment on a home.

The VLB Veterans Housing Assistance Program provides Veterans and Military Members with loans, where VLB is in first lien position of the primary residence. It's possible for a Veteran or Military Member to have one active loan in each program – land, home, and home improvement – at the same time.

Once a Veteran, or his or her successor, has successfully paid off a VLB home loan s/he may obtain another VLB home loan. The same applies to the VLB Land Loan Program. All VLB programs are self-funded, using no public taxpayer funding. VLB programs are financed with bonds, which are serviced by loan payments from Veteran and Military Member participants.

\*All VLB interest rates and available discounts are subject to change at any time. The VLB base rate is subject to adjustment on the first business day of each week. All VLB loans are subject to credit approval.



By: Kay L. Lee,  
Veterans Service Officer

## VETERAN ELIGIBILITY

To be eligible for VLB programs, Veterans, Military Members and their spouses must be:

- At least 18 years of age.
- A bona fide and legal resident of Texas on the date of application and meet one of the following service criteria:
- An active duty Military Member.
- A member of the Texas National Guard.
- A reserve component Military Member having completed 20 qualifying years for retirement.
- A Veteran having served at least 90 active duty days unless discharged sooner due to a service-connected disability and not discharged dishonorably.
- A surviving spouse of a Veteran listed as missing in action or whose death was service-connected.

## MILITARY SERVICE DOCUMENTS

- Military Service Records
- Visit the National Archives to request your military service records online, by mail, or by fax. Records include DD214/separation documents, personnel records and medical records.
- Military Record Request - Standard Form 180 (SF-180)

Request your military record using the National Archives Standard Form 180 (SF-180).

To learn more visit [www.vlb.texas.gov](http://www.vlb.texas.gov). For more information on VA or State benefits, please contact Montgomery County Veterans Service at 936-539-7842 or via email at [vets-vc@mctx.org](mailto:vets-vc@mctx.org).

Also visit us on Facebook at Montgomery County Veterans Service. ♦

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# KNOWLEDGEABLE. DEPENDABLE. STRATEGIC.



Unrestricted 2.47 acres located within ONE MILE of Highway 105 at Lake Conroe and minutes from 1488/The Woodlands! With 250+ feet on McCaleb Road and great visibility from the recently expanded thoroughfare - this tract has many possibilities to the end user - commercial, residential or a mix-use idea. Three bedroom home sits back from the road (approximately 260+ feet from McCaleb) and offers great updates and tons of charm! A 24x22 detached garage/workshop features concrete slab, electricity + water. **907 McCaleb Road in Montgomery. ML# 72547156. \$549,000**



This "Winslow House by Frank Lloyd Wright" inspired home is perfectly situated on a 1.1 acre lot and offers character and elegance from the outside in! The exterior offers large shade trees, double driveways (one to the main house & attached portico/carport, the other to the 2 car garage w/extended driveway parking) + an over-sized covered back patio w/dual overhead fans. The interior great room greets with high ceilings, floor-to-ceiling fireplace & 3 large arched windows that command the space and allow for great natural lighting. The island kitchen overlooks the great room and offers an eye-catching floor design, gas cooktop on the island, double ovens, serving bar, breakfast area + formal dining room. Private Primary bedroom offers a door leading to the back patio + a spa-like bathroom w/double sinks, vanity, soak tub and a walk-in shower that will WOW! Upstairs offers 3 additional bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, game room/entertainment area w/a balcony overlooking the front lawn. **495 Bass Way Court, Ridgeland Shores in Montgomery. ML# 20015607. \$474,900**



4 +/- acres of pure bliss! This property offers a totally updated/chic home + 3.994 acres + over-sized garage (24x25) + a barn (24x24) with a full bedroom and half bathroom + new private water well (420 +/- ft deep) + two RV hook-ups. Approximately 12 min from I-45 and less than 30 min from 59 and located in sought after Willis ISD. The exterior is equipped with fencing on 3 sides of the acreage and cyclone fencing right off the back patio for a "backyard" space. The main house boasts a 90% updated home from a new roof to a fully transformed house that includes: New HVAC, new roof, new windows, new interior/exterior breaker boxes, new plumbing (PEX tubing), water heater, whole kitchen, bathrooms, 24x11 back patio, over a 30ft long covered front patio, barn w/room + half bathroom (barn can easily be converted into an RV garage and/or have a second floor built on to living space). This place can easily be horse/animal ready. **10988 Rose Royal Drive, Hillcrest in Conroe. ML# 7888899. \$389,700**



Pool Time! The backyard is equipped with a private pool + spa, two levels of covered and uncovered entertainment space and a ground level lawn for kids, dogs and/or garden! The home offers a double car driveway, a 2 car garage + a 2 full car or truck attached brick carport, an extended front covered porch ready for relaxation and all located on a quiet cul-de-sac street. The interior greets w/a two story foyer, warm wood floors lead to the spacious living room w/wall of windows overlooking the pool area & a gas fireplace. Open kitchen w/island with bar seating space, gas cooktop, granite counters, breakfast area + formal dining room. The Primary bedroom is on the 1st floor and offers double sinks, vanity area, walk-in shower, soak tub, 2 walk-in closets (one has a top notch custom closet system!). Gameroom, study area, 3 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms are located upstairs. Conveniently located in Graystone Hills, minutes to I-45, elementary school is in the neighborhood, walking trails, parks, pool. **2408 Bramlet Drive, Graystone Hills in Conroe. ML# 64958412. \$365,000**



Chic & Clean! This home will WOW from the outside in! The exterior offers a double car driveway, 3 car garage w/custom sleek epoxy floors, shade trees, covered back patio w/cathedral ceiling dual fans, lights + the soothing sounds of the water fountain/feature that all overlooks the fenced backyard (brand new fence!) backing up to a private green belt. The interior boasts a two-story entry that leads to the living room w/solid wood floors & an eye-catching fireplace giving a soft contemporary vibe. The Kitchen is a stunner! Check out the counter tops w/the continuous flow all the way to the floor! Classic apron front sink w/a bay window, under cabinet lighting, gas range, under cabinet wine fridge, bar for sitting, breakfast area & Formal dining. The primary bedroom is on the 1st floor providing privacy, wood floors, fresh bathroom w/2 sinks, vanity area, walk-in shower + soak tub. Upstairs you will find the gameroom, 4 very spacious bedrooms and 2 full bathrooms (Jack & Jill setup). **8910 Edenbridge Street, Memorial Creek in Spring. ML# 50821464. \$358,700**



Great location PLUS peace & tranquility all situated on a park-like 1.38 acres with mature trees, manicured flower beds + 2 RV hookups! This 3 bedroom/2 full bathroom + half bathroom w/kitchenette area in the oversized garage offers so much! Tile floors w/wood inlays, fresh interior paint, spacious living room w/brick fireplace, wood ceiling beams and wall of windows that overlooks the back patio. Light & bright kitchen w/stylish granite counters, bar seating, gas cooking, and a dining room w/bay window. The Primary bedroom offers great natural light, awesome storage/closet, vanity area and an oversized shower. The secondary rooms are large and offer great closets. The exterior is equipped with a private water well, oversized garage, storage/covered parking area, HUGE fenced backyard and a generous covered patio. Updates include: Roof, windows, paint, window coverings, kitchen, bathrooms + more! High & dry! No flooding. **23257 Brook Forest Road, Brook Forest in New Caney. ML# 80939415. \$317,700**



This home is CHARMING! From the front to the back this home has a chic mid-century vibe! The interior will immediately WOW when you enter through the 3 Lite front door! The living room greets w/wood-like floors, floor-to-ceiling fireplace & awesome picture windows. Private study/office or gameroom is located off the living w/double entry w/doors on each entry for privacy. The updated kitchen offers wood cabinets, sleek solid surface countertops, stainless gas cooktop and hood vent, stainless dishwasher + industrial farmhouse sink. The Primary bedroom w/walk-in closet & modern bathroom w/sleek features. Secondary bedrooms are spacious w/great closets. The detached garage boasts a large air conditioned room on the 2nd floor! The exterior has a new roof, large back patio, manicured landscaping. Panorama offers a Golf Course, pool, Golf shop, Restaurant + NO HOA dues! UPGRADES: \*new A/C \*kitchen remodel\* new front door & back French doors\* exterior paint job on brick and new landscaping. **134 La Quinta Drive, Panorama- Hiwon in Conroe. ML# 33957776. \$258,900**



Check out this charming Craftsman-style, well-kept three bedroom home with a gameroom! The exterior boasts a covered front patio overlooking the shaded front yard, a large covered back patio w/a private fenced yard, fresh exterior paint, 5 year old roof, gutters + sprinkler system. The interior provides a very open & airy floor plan w/tile and wood floors throughout most of the home. Large living room w/wall of windows and striking wood floors. Island kitchen with breakfast bar, breakfast area + formal dining room w/wood floors. The Primary bedroom is spacious and offers a very sizable bathroom with vanity area, walk-in shower + soak tub. PLUS: a PRIVATE retreat/gameroom between the secondary bedrooms! Great setup for all members of the family! The interior has fresh paint, new carpet in bedrooms, ceiling fans and so much more! The neighborhood is equipped with a refreshing pool, parks, lakes, tennis courts, walking trails and social clubs like swim teams and bunco! **12818 Benton Park Lane, Villages of Northpointe in Tomball. ML# 29716135. \$252,700**



Bright & cozy 2 story, 4 bdrm home on almost 1/4 acre lot in highly sought after Kleinwood Neighborhood. This updated Home offers a new roof, double paned Low E windows, new carpet in living room, new concrete driveway and much more! The interior boasts a HUGE living room with a fireplace and picture windows overlooking the large backyard. Fresh kitchen with wood cabinets, granite counters, breakfast bar overlooking the formal dining room, buffet/coffee area, and breakfast area, + formal dining rooms. All bedrooms are located upstairs and are very spacious. The Primary bedroom has great character w/a sliding barn door leading to bathroom w/double sinks, LARGE walk-in shower + two closets. The backyard is made for fun & entertaining w/2 large covered patios, storage building plus PLENTY of room to add a pool on this almost 1/4 acre lot! Walking distance to all 3 schools, dog park, swimming pool plus Meyer Park. Home did not flood. **7619 Felician Lane, Kleinwood in Spring. ML# 45509520. \$237,300**

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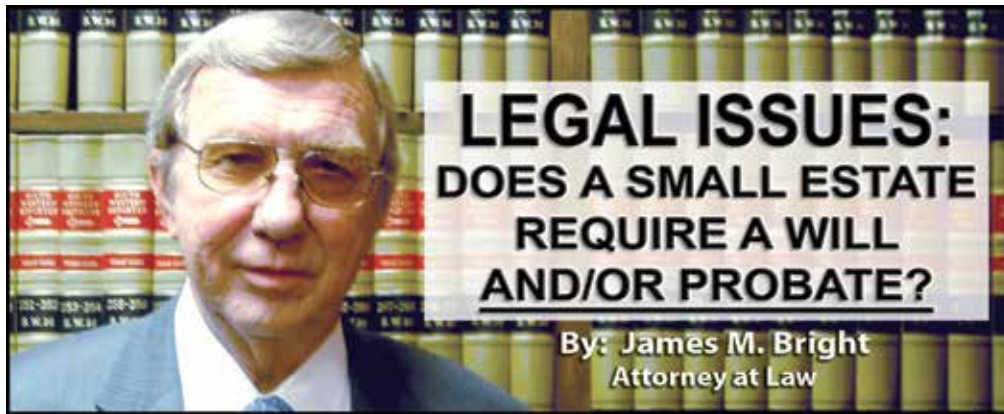
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*The following is provided for informational purposes only and is not, nor should it be construed as legal advice.*

A common question that presents itself in my law practice is, "Do I need a will and should it be probated if all that I own is a house, car, some furniture and a small bank account or savings account?"

Unfortunately, the answer to this question is not always a simple "Yes" or "No" and, sadly, sometimes inquiry regarding the need for a will is not made until after a person has died. The only safe answer to, "Do I need a Will?" is "Yes".

The need for probate really depends not so much on the value of the decedent's property as it does upon the type of property.

A greatly over-simplified rule of thumb is, "If the property being passed after death is property that must pass by title or deed, then the estate will probably need both a will and a probate proceeding."

Examples of assets which are commonly held by small estates include:

**Bank or Savings Accounts** – If they are only in the name of the decedent and do not have a designation on the account that they are "joint with right of survivorship" or "payable on death," then they must pass through probate.

**Residence** – Settling title to real property will in most cases require a probate proceeding even if the property is a community interest which is passing to a surviving spouse. This becomes even more important if the decedent had children from a prior marriage. This circumstance can result in the surviving spouse owning only one-half of the residence, and the children from a prior relationship owning the other one-half. In the most simple of cases, where the residence is being offered for sale and all of the heirs-at-law agree (a situation that does not often exist with blended families), and a title company is willing to write a title policy to protect the new owner

solely upon the authority of an affidavit filed by the heirs, probate may not be required. (This is not usually a viable alternative and should not be relied upon.)

**Automobiles** – Typically, automobile titles may be transferred without probate through an "Affidavit of Heirship for a Motor Vehicle." A form of the affidavit may be found free of charge by downloading from the Texas Department of Transportation site online at [www.txdmv.gov](http://www.txdmv.gov)

**Insurance Policies and IRA Accounts** – These accounts typically pass outside of probate, and "letters testamentary" are not normally required to transfer ownership. A large and often encountered exception is when the decedent has failed to designate a beneficiary or the beneficiary predeceases. In those cases, probate will be required to transfer title. If there is a will, accounts will be transferred pursuant to the will; if no will, the accounts will be distributed pursuant to intestate succession.

**Personal Belongings** – Most personal items do not require a probate proceeding to determine how they should be distributed after death, and if those items are the only items in controversy, it is recommended in most cases that you not submit it to probate and simply find a way to distribute the estate to the decedent's heirs. In some cases, however, no matter how small the estate, it may take a probate proceeding and a court declaration of heirs to keep one heir from riding roughshod over the others.

If the decedent's estate is less than \$75,000.00 exclusive of homestead and no will exists, then it is possible to obtain a court order declaring the identities of the heirs and estab-

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lishing the percentages of property which should pass to those persons. (Although this is still a probate proceeding, it is greatly simplified and is only used when no will exists.)

In addition to the preceding, at least two other things should be considered before a person decides that they may not need a will:

1. If they have minor children, they should have a will to designate a guardian. (A designation can also be made without a formal will.)

2. If they have a blended family, it is almost certain that they will need a will if they are to protect either their current or previous family.

Should you have questions regarding the necessity of a will or the necessity of probate, do not hesitate to call an attorney of your choice to make your needs known. Most attorneys will not try to perform those tasks if all of the indications are present that they are not needed.

If you do need a will, which is probable in most cases, please be advised that it is far less expensive to do a will that expresses your intent than it is to die intestate and leave your heirs with the burden of sorting out the relationships.

James Bright has been admitted to practice before the Federal Courts for the Southern District of Texas and Eastern District of Texas as well as all of the Justice Courts, Probate Courts, County Courts at Law, District Courts, Courts of Appeal and Supreme Court for the State of Texas. He maintains an office in Houston and by appointment another at 208 McCown Street in the heart of historic Montgomery. Contact may be made by telephone (936) 449-4455 or (281) 586-8277. For more information about wills or probate in Texas, please see- [www.houstontxprobate.com](http://www.houstontxprobate.com). ♦

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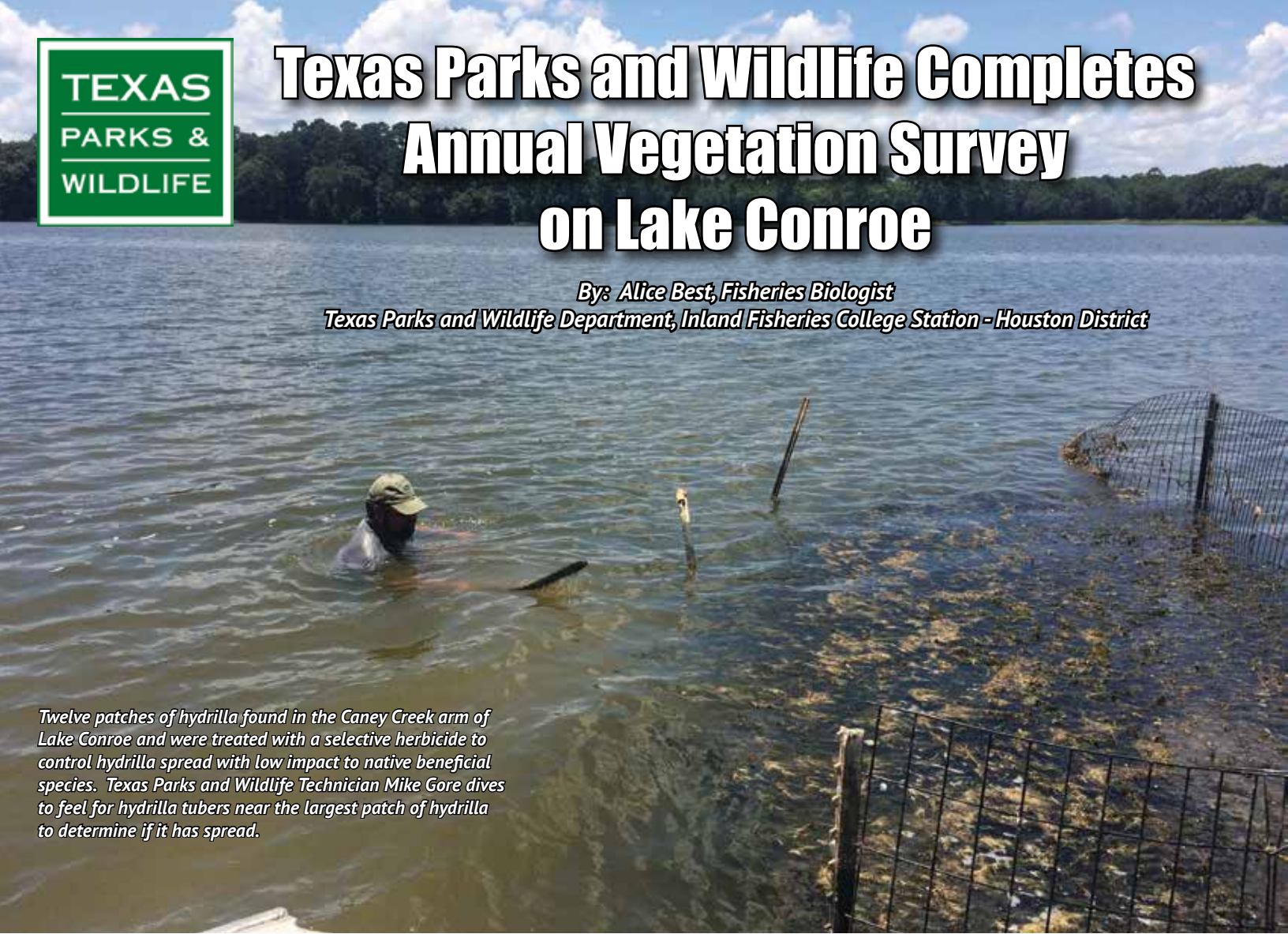
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# Texas Parks and Wildlife Completes Annual Vegetation Survey on Lake Conroe

*By: Alice Best, Fisheries Biologist  
Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, Inland Fisheries College Station - Houston District*



*Twelve patches of hydrilla found in the Caney Creek arm of Lake Conroe and were treated with a selective herbicide to control hydrilla spread with low impact to native beneficial species. Texas Parks and Wildlife Technician Mike Gore dives to feel for hydrilla tubers near the largest patch of hydrilla to determine if it has spread.*

Every summer, Texas Parks and Wildlife, College Station-Houston Fisheries district team conducts an annual vegetation survey on Lake Conroe. The Conroe surveys began when hydrilla dominated the lake and were used to track its coverage and control. We still use annual surveys to track invasive species, but nowadays we also get to follow restoration efforts of beneficial native species.



*The Lake Conroe Native Plant Nursery was built by Seven Coves Bass Club and Texas Parks and Wildlife and is maintained by the San Jacinto River Authority. Each year the San Jacinto River Authority plants over 600 native plants into Lake Conroe for habitat restoration, often with the help of volunteers, anglers, and Texas Parks and Wildlife.*

Many scientific surveys will sub-sample a population instead of counting each individual. For example, we may catch 200 largemouth bass and use their ages, lengths and weights to estimate what the entire population of bass looks like without disrupting the fishery by trying to catch every single fish. Not so with our vegetation survey! Each summer we travel the entire perimeter of Lake Conroe's shoreline—every cove, canal, and island—cataloguing the size and species of each plant we find touching the water. This data is then mapped in a Geographic Information System (GIS) which allows us to calculate the total area each species covers. The process also creates maps that we can share with the San Jacinto River Authority to control invasive species and with our restoration partners like Seven Coves Bass Club to promote native beneficial species with and find the best fish habitat.

Vegetation surveys can be grueling. We spend long days in direct sunlight, traveling at a snail's pace around the lake with no end to the boat engine's drone as we monotonously note each species. However, it gives provides us with data vital to manage the fisheries and habitat on Lake Conroe and is one of the best chances we have to see every detail of the lake. We often see eagles diving for fish, herons gliding over the surface, and Largemouth Bass hunting the shallows.

The 2020 survey wrapped up in July, just in time to send the results off for this article. There has been a marvelous expansion of native sub-

*Continued on page 30*



*Texas Parks and Wildlife Technician Mike Gore displays young vallisneria from a free growing colony in the northern end of Lake Conroe.*

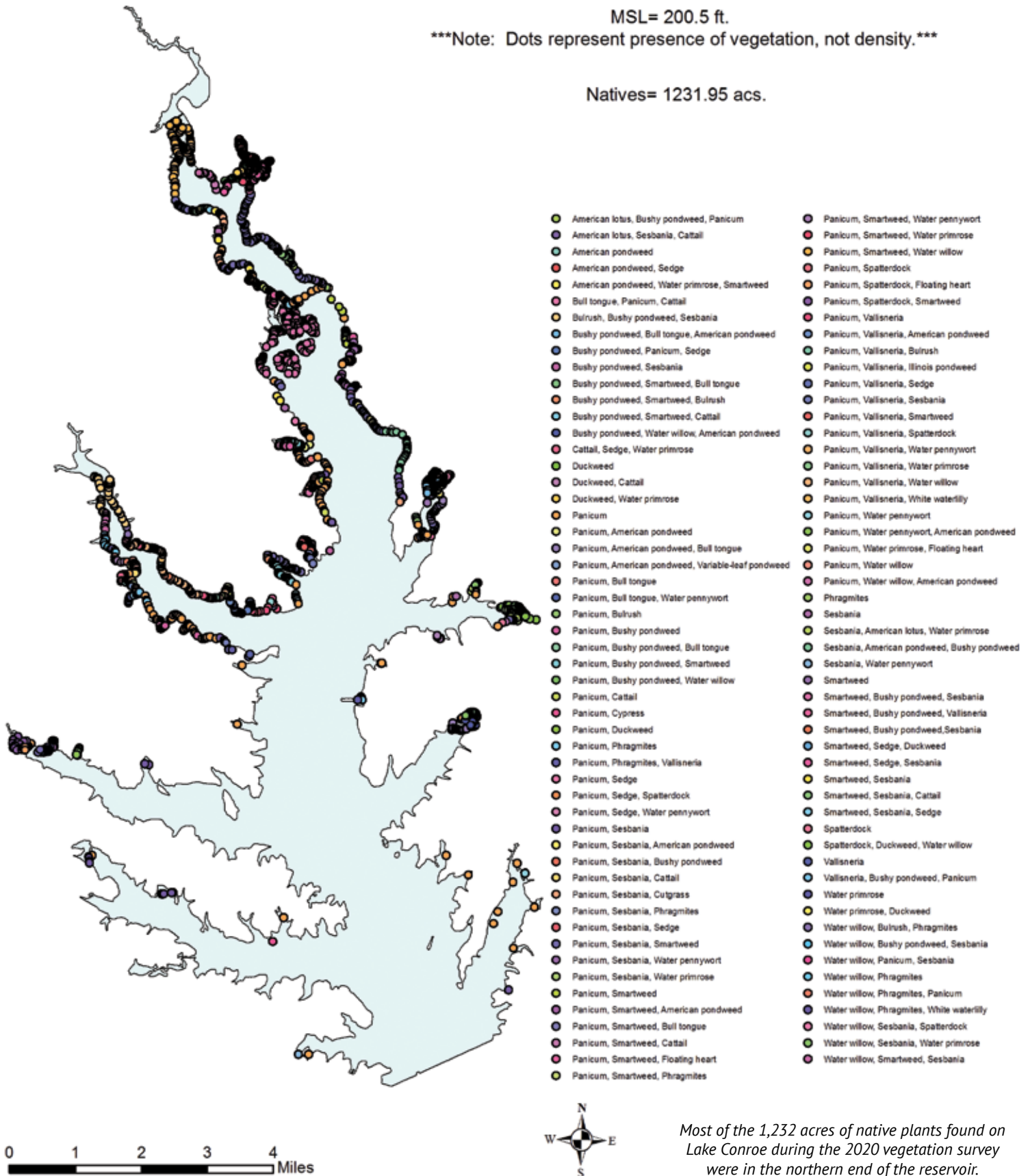
# Lake Conroe Natives 2020

Survey dates 07/06-07/07, 07/10, 07/14, 07/16-07/17, 07/22-07/23

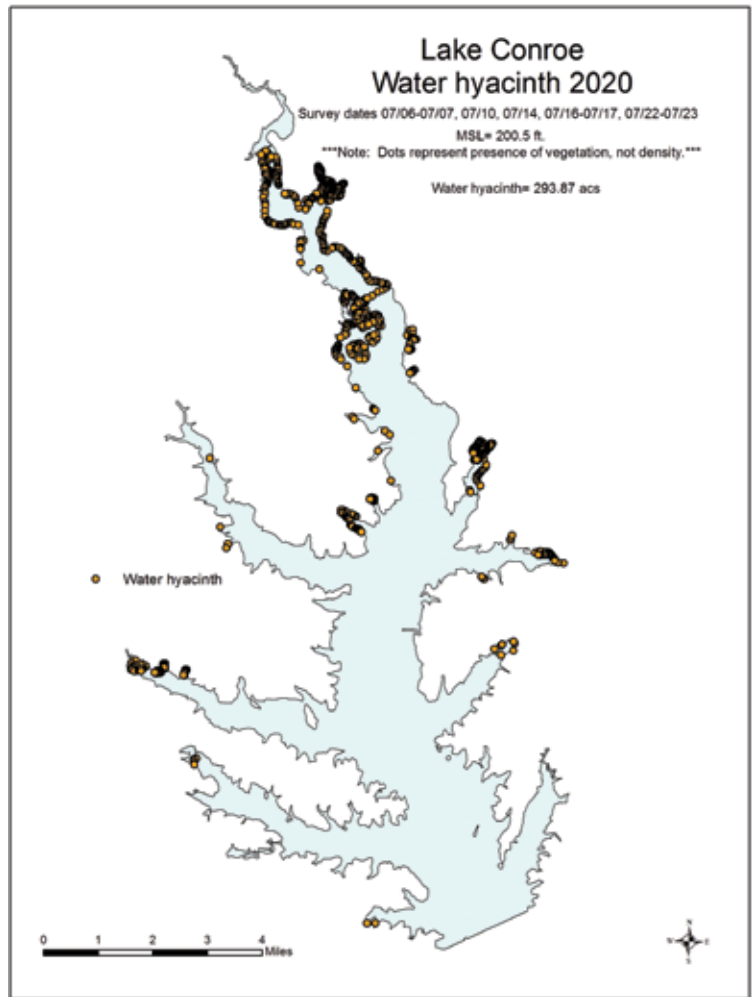
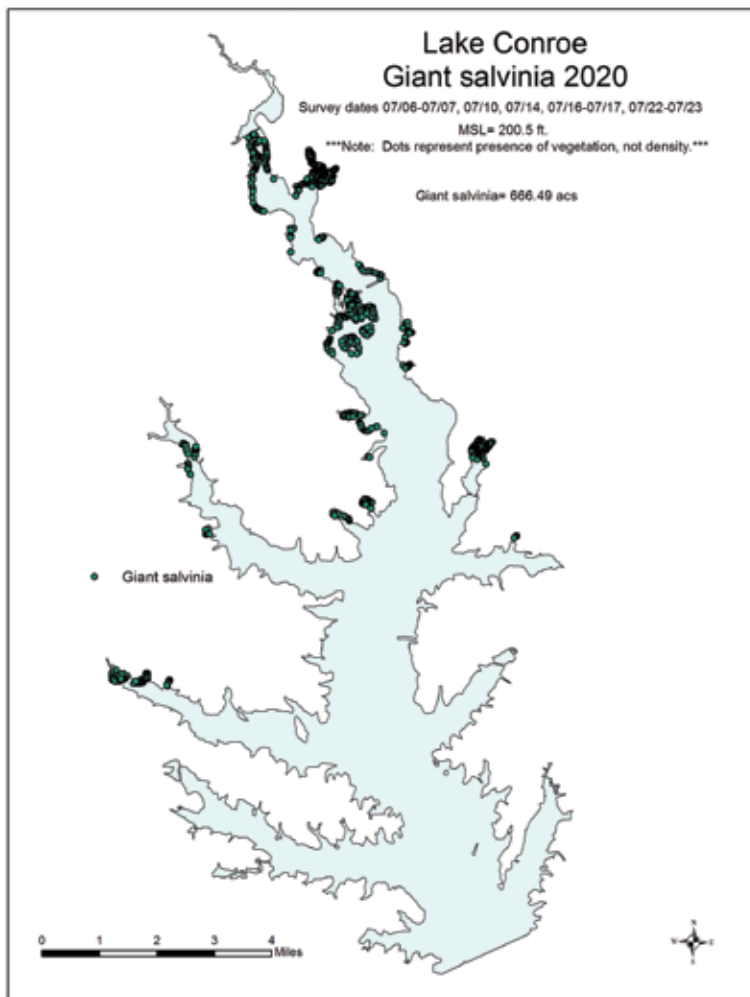
MSL= 200.5 ft.

\*\*\*Note: Dots represent presence of vegetation, not density.\*\*\*

Natives= 1231.95 acs.



Most of the 1,232 acres of native plants found on Lake Conroe during the 2020 vegetation survey were in the northern end of the reservoir.



The 2020 annual Lake Conroe vegetation survey completed by TPWD found 666 acres of giant salvinia and 294 acres of water hyacinth. Both plants expanded coverage in 2020, likely due to a lack of high spring flows that have helped flush them out in past years. The San Jacinto River Authority has been busy treating giant salvinia and water hyacinth throughout the summer.

mersed and floating-leaved species like American pondweed, bushy pond, vallisneria, and white water lily. These species provide valuable fish and wildlife habitat, reduce erosion, and improve water quality without forming thick mats that interfere with access to the lake. These native species were introduced to Lake Conroe from a nursery built by the Seven Coves Bass Club and maintained by the San Jacinto River Authority as part of the Lake Conroe Aquatic Restoration project spearheaded by Texas Parks and Wildlife. This effort has been successful so far: this year we saw 1,232 acres of native aquatic plants, mostly in the northern end of the lake above FM 1097. Natives have been expanding for the last several years, but this year's boom was a surprise to everyone and treat to see our hard work with native restoration bear fruit. The habit these plants create will be boon to fish and wildlife throughout the lake.



Plants like vallisneria (also called eel grass) form excellent fish and wildlife habitat and do not block access to the water. Vallisneria has formed waving underwater meadows in several sheltered coves north of the FM 1097 bridge.

Unfortunately, not all plants are beneficial to Lake Conroe. The annual survey also allows us to track the abundance of invasive species like water hyacinth and giant salvinia. Both species form dense mats on the surface of the water that most boats cannot pass through. They prevent oxygen from diffusing into the water, lowering oxygen levels available to invertebrates and fish, block sunlight, and acidify the water. They grow quickly (giant salvinia can

double in size in under 10 days) and they don't even provide good habitat for most fish species!

We did see an expansion of water hyacinth and giant salvinia this year, likely due to a lack of large rain events this spring. Lake Conroe has experienced large rain events each spring for the last several years. The rains pushed the hyacinth and salvinia out of the hard-to-reach coves and back waters, and downstream over the dam. Without Mother Nature's help this year, both species were able to expand more quickly. The San Jacinto River Authority has been busy treating these invasives, running multiple simultaneous vegetation control teams throughout the summer and treating hundreds of acres of water hyacinth and giant salvinia.

We also found minute traces of hydrilla in the Caney Creek arm of Lake Conroe. This is the first hydrilla we've



Native aquatic plant species, like the white water lily and vallisneria shown here, are introduced into Lake Conroe in protected founder colonies to give them a head start over herbivores like grass carp and turtles. Over time, the plants spread beyond the protective wire and create new colonies from seeds and propagules.

seen since grass carp were stocked in 2006-2008. For several years we have expected hydrilla to reemerge in 2020-2021 as the grass carp naturally die off. Hydrilla can provide good fish habitat in some lakes, but on Lake Conroe it has a history of forming dense mats across thousands of acres, preventing access to the water for boaters, anglers, and homeowners. We caught the reemergence early, finding just 1,300 square feet (0.03 acres) of hydrilla in 12 small patches. Each patch was immediately treated with an herbicide that selectively targets hydrilla and has low impact on native species.

Texas Parks and Wildlife and the San Jacinto River Authority intend to strictly control hydrilla on Lake Conroe to prevent access issues while protecting and promoting native aquatic plants to improve fish habitat and fishing. We know that hydrilla brings out many people's passion and love for Lake Conroe and will be seeking public input from anglers, boat-



*Giant salvinia is a nuisance on Lake Conroe and requires constant control by the San Jacinto River Authority, who have been running multiple vegetation control groups throughout the summer.*

ers, homeowners, and local businesspeople in the coming months. We will also continue to provide updates through this publication, social media, and regular meetings. If you would like more information, to ask us questions about

vegetation management, or to be notified of upcoming public meetings, please contact Alice Best at [Alice.Best@tpwd.texas.gov](mailto:Alice.Best@tpwd.texas.gov) of 979-272-1430 ext 224. ♦



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# TIME FOR FALL BABIES; SQUIRRELS, ROUND TWO

*By: Lisa Wolling, Executive Director*

As we head into "fall" here in Southeast Texas, most wildlife species are done raising their young for the year. However, most of our native squirrels have litters twice a year; the first cycle is very early in the year, January through March, and the second cycle is August through October. So once again for our little squirrel friends, it is nesting time.

In our part of Texas, there are three different species of squirrels found; the eastern fox squirrel; the eastern gray squirrel; and the flying squirrel. The fox and gray squirrels are diurnal (out during the day) and the flying squirrel is nocturnal (out at night). All three species spend the majority of their lives in the trees.

The eastern fox squirrel is the largest species of squirrel in our area. Most of them have black-tipped gray fur on their bodies with orange fur on their bellies, legs, and feet. Their tail fur is fringed in orange fur as well. Around Southeast Texas, there are some groups of fox squirrels that have all black fur. Fox squirrels are most active in early morning and again in late afternoon. They prefer to nest in tree cavities, but they will also build leaf and twig nests high in the tree tops. Female squirrels often construct multiple nests. In the event one nest is damaged or becomes infested with fleas or

are about ten weeks old. By three months of age they are able to survive on their own. Fox squirrels can live to be up to 15 years of age.

About 90% of all squirrels found in eastern Texas are eastern gray squirrels. While similar in many ways to the fox squirrel, the gray squirrel is slightly smaller, has slightly larger ears, and its fur is mainly gray with white fur on the belly. They are more social than fox squirrels so they are more likely to feed in groups. The gray squirrel is faster and more skittish than the fox squirrel, and for that reason they are sometimes also called cat squirrels. Like the fox squirrel, they prefer tree cavities to nest in, but if none can be found they will build a nest (called a drey) consisting of leaves and twigs. They are more apt to breed throughout the year, but mainly from July-September and again from December-February. Pups eyes open at five weeks of age and they begin to explore outside of the nest by six weeks old. They remain in family groups for about another month after that until they are fully independent.

The third species of squirrel found in our area is seldom seen although quite common. The little flying squirrel is only about the size of an adult hamster. They don't actually fly, but rather glide from tree to tree, sometimes

mates, flying squirrels often colonize in groups of up to fifty to spend the winter together. Although often confused with sugar gliders, they are completely different species; sugar gliders are indigenous to Australia and Indonesia.

Female squirrels often have multiple nest sights, which enables them to move their young should one nest be destroyed or contaminated by insect pests. If you happen to come upon a baby squirrel that has fallen from its nest, or if the entire nest is found on the ground, it may still be possible to reunite the baby or babies with their mother. Check our website ([www.ftwl.org](http://www.ftwl.org)) for helpful flowcharts, listed by species, about how and when found animals may need some assistance.

Squirrels are an important part of a balanced ecosystem, and they help to keep our environment a little more verdant and healthy. They are well known for burying seeds and nuts, which they do to save them for feasting on later. Many of these seeds or nuts are carried away to areas far from where they were found and buried in locations away from their host plant. This helps to spread the new growth of plants and trees. Squirrels bury so many that some studies indicate as much as 75% of these seeds and nuts remain uneaten, so they are left to sprout into new plants, shrubs, and trees. A single squirrel can bury several thousand nuts over the course of a few months. Squirrels also eat different species of mushrooms, which keeps forested areas healthier by helping to disperse fungi which are beneficial to many trees. Squirrels' constant digging and burying helps to aerate the soil and introduce organic matter into it. They eat many insects (especially during breeding season) including beetles and grubs which might otherwise infest trees and lawns. Squirrels are also an important part in the food chain, often being taken as prey by hawks, eagles, and owls. We love our nutty little friends, and we hope once more people understand their behavior and how they benefit the environment they will come to appreciate their antics as well.

To learn more about what we do and view pictures of many of the animals we assist, please visit our Facebook page at [www.facebook.com/SavingTexasWildlife](https://www.facebook.com/SavingTexasWildlife). Details can be found at [www.ftwl.org](http://www.ftwl.org), and then click on "How to Help". We also have a great deal of helpful information on our website about other species of animals and how to assess if they need help or not. If you need assistance with an animal in need, please email us at [ftwl.help@gmail.com](mailto:ftwl.help@gmail.com). For the time being, due to ongoing Covid concerns, our educational center remains closed. ♦



*Left: baby fox squirrel, about four weeks old. Note the buff/orange fur coloration on the belly and tail.*

*Center: baby gray squirrels, about three weeks old. They have white fur on belly and fringe of tail.*

*Right: baby flying squirrels, about four weeks old. They are much smaller, have smaller ears, a flat tail, and skin flaps between front and rear legs.*

mites, the mother squirrel will move her pups to one of her alternate nesting sites. Fox squirrels usually breed twice a year in our part of Texas, once in January/February and again in May/June, although occasionally litters are born in late summer or early fall. Most litters consist of three to four pups, which are born hairless, blind, and helpless. They mature slowly with eyes opening at five weeks of age. They leave their nest at about eight weeks of age but won't venture out of their nest tree until they

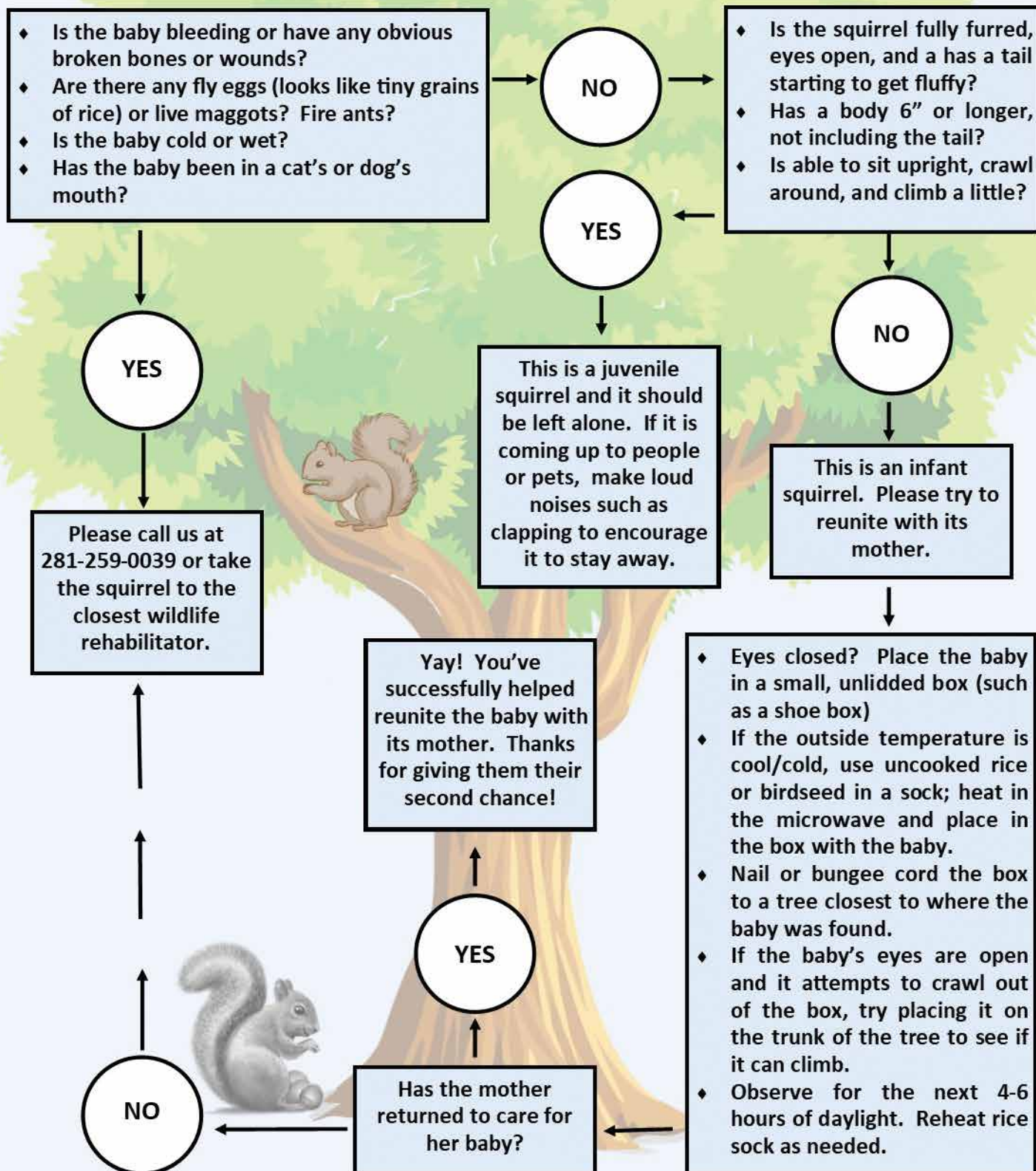
as much as 150 feet in a single flight. Flying squirrels have skin that forms wing-like flaps which stretch between its "ankle" and "wrist". Its fluffy, flattened tail acts as both a rudder in flight and a brake to slow down forward movement as they come to the end of their glide. Flying squirrels eat many nuts, berries, buds, grasshoppers, moths, bugs, and grubs. They, like all squirrels, prefer to nest in tree cavities. They mainly breed from March to May, although pups may be born year round also. In colder cli-



# I Found a Baby Squirrel

In our part of Texas, baby squirrels are born in January-March and again in August-October. Their eyes open at four to five weeks of age. They may begin exploring on their own by six weeks of age. Their best chance of survival is to be left with their natural mom. If you find a baby squirrel, refer to this chart for guidance.

[www.ftwl.org](http://www.ftwl.org)—[www.facebook.com/SavingTexasWildlife](https://www.facebook.com/SavingTexasWildlife)





*This adorable fluffy chick is only around 2 weeks old, and out exploring a great new world with its siblings.*

## Carolina Wrens – Little Brown Jobs

In the birding world small brown birds are sometimes lumped together and called Little Brown Jobs, or LBJs for short. Our local wrens fall right into this category. You may see House Wrens and maybe even a Bewick's Wren, but a very common LBJ in East Texas is the beguiling little Carolina Wren. You will hear them before

you see them, and their call gives them away. A huge noise comes out of these little round birds, and when they blast, they often repeat their call in 3's or 4's. From the males you will hear loud calls of "CheeseburgerCheeseburgerCheeseburger" or "WeNeedYou WeNeedYou WeNeedYou", or even "FigaroFigaroFigaro"! Listen for any

loud repeating call of three, and it is probably a Carolina Wren. However, when they are encouraging their chicks to leave the nest for the first time, the parents make a lovely quiet trilling call.

These bitty birds are easy to hear but often very hard to spot! They blend in extremely well with leaf litter and tree trunks. Shy, restless, but very curious, these fellows are always on the move. Carolina Wrens will explore your garage or patio, pillage through your yard leaves and brush piles, and then flit to low branches or to climb up and down tree trunks. They hop around endlessly and never seem to quit moving! Extended flight is not one of their strong points. Mostly they just fly a few feet up to the next tree or down to the nearest ground litter.

Nesting generally no more than 6 feet off the ground, these wrens will nest almost anywhere. On your patio or in your garage you may be surprised to find their little 5 inch nests in a flowerpot or a cardboard box! Outside they nest in dense yaupon stands or tall thick shrubbery. Clutch sizes range from 3-7 eggs, and these little birds can have up to 3 broods per season! Once eggs are laid it takes only about 4 weeks total for chicks to hatch and fledge, and these newly fledged chicks are tiny, only 2-1/2" tall! Looking more like a plop of old leaves, the babies have fuzzy head feathers, short wings and the tiniest of tails! Encouraged by their parents, they hop and climb, staying low to the ground on their first day out of the nest than most other fledging birds. They simply cannot fly well until their feathers grow more, but they can climb trees, forage for insects, and explore their new territory.

The East Texas Piney Woods is a fine home for our Carolina Wrens. During springtime, leave your garage door open and you may discover a batch of nesting LBJs. But during win-



*Since it cannot yet fly, one of the first instinctive actions this fledgling has is to get off the ground and climb up into the safety of a nearby pine tree.*



Adult Carolina Wrens are only 5" tall. Shy but loud, they blend into the forest with cinnamon wings, white eyebrow stripes and little round bodies. They use their curved beaks to turn over ground litter and find insects.



What better camouflage than for a chick to look like a small pile of leaves! Note how tiny his tail and wings are during his first hours out of the nest. He can flit, climb and hop just fine, but not yet fly.



A Carolina Wren nest is made of mud, leaves and twigs, and is only about 5" wide by 5" deep. These birds build them almost anywhere, and they often have side entrances. This nest sits under a car jack in a garage!

ter, if you care to keep these cute birds close, put out a suet feeder for them. Carolina Wrens will enjoy the feeders, and this way you can enjoy them!

Learn more about the incredible nature in our area by joining a chapter of the Texas Master Naturalist organization. To find a chapter close to you, or to read about the state program, go online to [www.txmn.org](http://www.txmn.org). Volunteer and get involved! ♦



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