

DOCK LINE

The Woodlands

MAGAZINE

October 2020



greater houston
PEDIATRIC DENTISTRY, PLLC

Little Teeth are a Big Deal

Why Greater Houston Pediatric Dentistry is a Place Kids Love to Go! See page 8



Aquatic Plant Management
on Lake Conroe
It Takes a Village
See Page 18

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As we enter into another season, sadly it is safe to say nothing much has changed from the summer. We are continuing on the road of uncharted territory as we move through another month of 2020, which means we are continuing to adapt to the new normalcy society has implemented upon us. Rules with changing variables on a daily basis get 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 us to stand together. We are a community of resilience, compassion and generosity. It has become apparent what a great community it is in which we live. As the holiday season inches closer upon us, we encourage everyone to take a look around, celebrate the little things and support your local businesses, they need your support now more than ever as we all struggle to get through this unprecedented time. If we all stick together, we will be stronger than ever.

Until next month...



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DOCK LINE

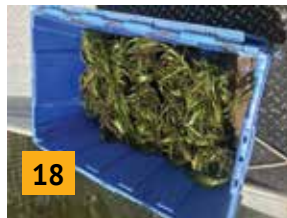
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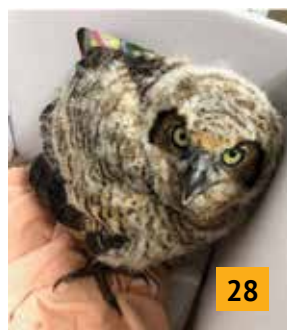
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James M. Bright - Attorney at Law



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photo in our pumpkin patch. Halloween snacks and drinks will be
handed out. Please call to reserve a time slot.

Only a limited number of families will enter at a time.

Also, during the entire month of October, we will have our pumpkin
patch up, so bring the kids in for a dental check up and fall photos at
the same time!



Little Teeth are a Big Deal

Why Greater Houston Pediatric Dentistry is a Place Kids Love to Go!



BY: HANNAH SHERMAN

Serving families in the Houston area for ten years - opened the Conroe location last year.

A Gentle and Caring Approach

At Greater Houston Pediatric Dentistry, we strive to create a welcoming environment for all children. When entering, each member of our team will welcome your family with a smile. We are truly invested in making sure each child feels comfortable and safe, and leaves feeling happy and excited with a sense of accomplishment. We are firm believers that every child should love going to their pediatric dentist! Our goal is to make the entire experience as fun and enjoyable as possible. We get to know our patients on a personal level. We are passionate about promoting dental education, prevention, and creating a fun, nurturing environment.

Our Doctors

Dr. Linh Luu and Dr. Badi Misaqi, our pediatric dentists, bring a lot of care and compassion to what we do each day. They combine their knowledge and expertise with clear communication. They will always make recommendations on each child's individual needs and risk assessment, and ultimately what is best long term for your child's health. We gently alleviate fears and build up confidence. We build motivation and give children a sense of pride in their smiles and their behaviors. We communicate with age appropriate techniques. We create a dental home where parents can trust our recommendations, our skills, and our care for their children. Our goal is for children to become the best version of themselves, to be great dental patients for life, and to maintain a lifetime of healthy habits and beautiful smiles.



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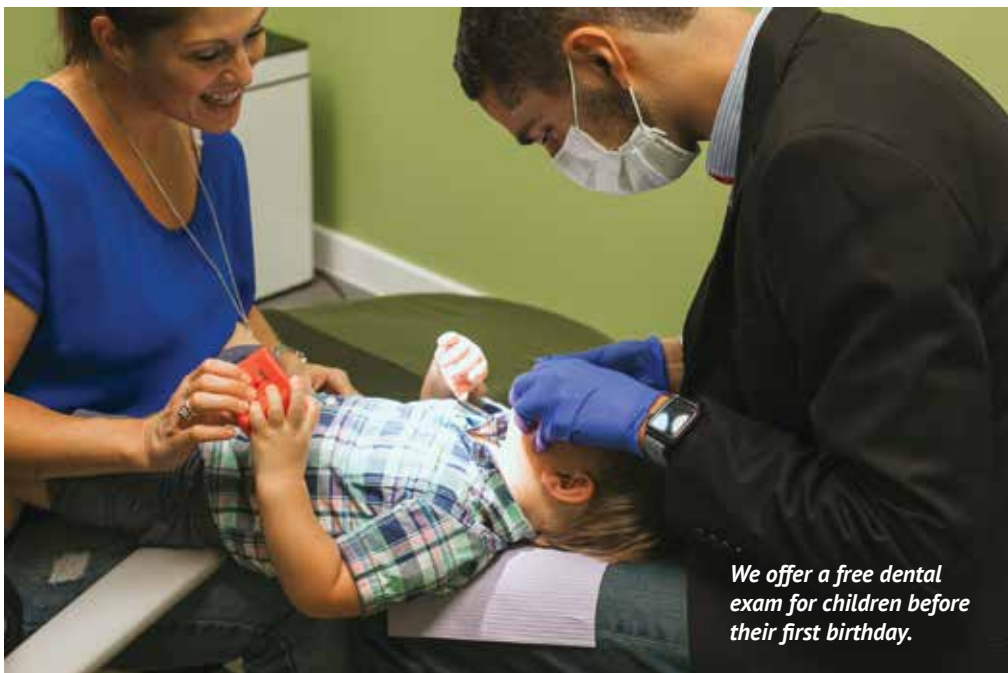
In addition to comprehensive pediatric dental services for children, we offer:

Esthetic white crowns, pediatric partials, laser dentistry, and wisdom teeth extractions with a highly trained and skilled surgeon.

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Continued on page 10 ➔

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We offer a free dental exam for children before their first birthday.



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longer. Our advanced digital imaging and equipment allows us to accurately diagnose early.

Why an Age 1 visit is Critical

Parents are sometimes nervous to take their child to the dentist or to even treat cavities at a young age. We are trained and equipped to manage behavior to make your child's visit as comfortable and as fun as possible. Our team is specially trained in behavior management, so don't be afraid to take your child to the dentist early. The recommended first dental visit should be as soon as teeth erupt or by age one. The earlier they start, the sooner they feel comfortable in the dental chair, and we can really work on preventing cavities from the start. Establish a dental home early so we can work together for prevention.

Dentistry is absolutely essential, as it is an integral part of overall health.

The ADA strongly encourages keeping routine dental appointments to maintain optimal health. Especially in children, where prevention and early detection of cavities is essential to avoiding big problems later.

Our practice keeps up with the ever changing guidelines and strictly enforces protocols set forth by the CDC and state for safety for your child and our team.

Greater Houston Pediatric Dentistry offers a complimentary dental exam for children before their first birthday, free of charge. ♦



Even puppies need their teeth brushed! Have your kids practice good home care by keeping their dog's teeth clean!

Join us for our (Socially Distant) Fall Festival/Open House!

October 22, 2020 • 5:30pm-8pm

Come in and see Houston's #1 choice for quality dental care for children and adolescents, where we make each visit fun and enjoyable for kids and their parents.

Dr. Linh Luu and Dr. Badi Misaqi and our team look forward to meeting your family and invite you to choose us as your dental home.

Dress up, treat-or-treat, get some Halloween goodies, and take a photo in our pumpkin patch.

Halloween snacks and drinks will be handed out. Other surprises to come!

***Please call to reserve a time slot. Only a limited number of families will enter at a time. *Masks required.**

During the entire month of October, our pumpkin patch is up, so bring the kids in for their check up and photos at the same time!



Greater Houston Pediatric Dentistry's Conroe office is located at 381 South Loop 336 W #1200, Conroe, TX 77304. Their office hours are Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Saturday by appointment. To request an appointment, call (936) 703-2131 or go to their website, www.greaterhoustonpediatricdentistry.com.



By: Kay L. Lee,
Veterans Service Officer

SBP-DIC Offset Phase Out

Congress included a phased elimination of the Survivor's Benefit Plan-Dependency Indemnity Compensation (SBP-DIC) offset in the 2020 National Defense Authorization Act. The first adjustment to the offset formula will be for January 2021 (paid on February 1, 2021). The offset will be eliminated entirely beginning on January 1, 2023.

Who this change affects

- This change affects surviving spouses who are, or who will become in the future, eligible for both Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) payments and Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) payments, and who are subject to the SBP-DIC offset.
- The law also affects the spouses and children of service members who died while on active duty or inactive duty, in the line of duty, if the children are currently receiving SBP payments because the surviving spouse chose the optional child annuity.
- This change does not affect surviving spouses who receive only SBP (but do not receive DIC). It also does not affect spouses who receive DIC only, either because SBP was declined by the service member at retirement or because the service member was a disabled veteran who was not also a retiree.
- It is important to note that this change does not impact any retirees or surviving spouses if SBP spouse coverage was previously declined or if a retiree elected child-only coverage at retirement. The change also does not create opportunities for new enrollment in SBP for retirees who previously declined coverage.

What you need to know

- Surviving spouses who are subject to the SBP-DIC offset will potentially see the first change in their January 2021 SBP payment that is paid on February 1, 2021.
- We are unable to provide individual estimates of the upcoming changes in spouse SBP annuity payments due to this change in the law. Please do not call our Customer Care Center to request an individual estimate.
- If you previously received a refund of SBP premiums paid due to the SBP-DIC offset, you won't need to pay back that refund because of this change in the law.
- Eligible survivors will continue to receive SSIA, up to the prescribed maximum amount (\$323 per month for 2020) or the amount of SBP that is offset due to DIC, whichever is less. SSIA will no longer be paid once the SBP-DIC offset is fully eliminated in 2023.
- Please keep in mind that there are many different situations for individuals, and you may have individual questions we cannot answer yet. We are continuing to develop full implementation guidance for this change.

What you need to do

- You do not need to notify us that your SBP payment is affected by this change in the law.
- The most important action SBP annuitants can take at this time is to ensure your annuity account information is up-to-date and includes your correct mailing address so we can contact you, if needed. Also, if you're not using myPay, set up a profile now and add your email address. Please note: only annuitants who are currently receiving an SBP or SSIA payment from DFAS can access myPay.
- If you are a surviving spouse who previously chose the Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) child annuity when your spouse died on active duty or inactive duty, you do not need to take any action at this time. You will be contacted by the appropriate military service prior to the annuity reverting to you as the surviving spouse on January 1, 2023.

When you can expect changes

Based on the NDAA, the phases of the SBP-DIC offset elimination are:

- In 2020, surviving spouses will continue to have their SBP offset by the full amount of Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) they receive from the Department of Veterans Affairs.
- In 2021, SBP will be reduced by no more than two-thirds of the amount of DIC rather than by the entire amount of DIC, even though eligible surviving spouses will continue to receive the full amount of DIC.

Please note that not all surviving spouses will see an increase in their SBP payment in 2021. It is possible that if a spouse's SBP monthly payments are less than two-thirds of the amount of monthly Dependency Indemnity Compensation (DIC), they may not see an increase in 2021.

- In 2022, SBP will be reduced by no more than one-third of the amount of DIC received.
- In 2023, the SBP-DIC offset will be totally eliminated, so that surviving spouses eligible for both programs will receive both SBP and DIC in full, effective January 1 (paid on February 1, 2023).

For more information on VA & State Benefits contact Montgomery County Veterans Service at 936-539-7842 or via email at vetsvc@mctx.org, and like us on Facebook – Montgomery County Veterans Service. ♦



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TAXES and the 2020 Election

With the COVID-19 pandemic dominating the news cycle for most of the year, many may have moved the thought of the upcoming presidential election to the back burner for much of the year. However, election season is upon us and it's time to review the candidates.

With any administration, existing or new, the question of tax policy tends to loom on the minds of voters, regardless of whether they favor red or blue. So what are the tax positions and proposals of Trump vs Biden? Interestingly, public accounting firm Crowe has a nice summary of these two candidates' proposed policies for taxes on individuals. I've summarized this below and it is a neutral statement of the facts upon which you get to decide. Vote your conscience and may the best man win.

Individual Tax Rate

Current law is a top marginal tax rate of 37%. Rates are scheduled to increase to pre-Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017 (TCJA) amounts after 2025. These are some of the lowest effective rates seen in decades.

Trump wants to enact a 10% middle-class tax cut, which could include lowering the 22% marginal tax rate to 15%. He also wants to extend the individual TCJA rates that are scheduled to expire after 2025.

Joe Biden proposes raising the top marginal tax rate to the pre-TCJA rate of 39.6% for income over \$400,000.

Deductions

Current law has the basic standard deduction for married couples filing jointly at \$24,800 (\$12,400 for single taxpayers or for married taxpayers filing separately, and \$18,650 for heads of household). After 2025, the basic standard deduction is scheduled to revert to pre-TCJA amounts.

The TCJA suspended the personal exemption and most individual deductions through 2025.

Trump is proposing extending the higher basic standard deduction and other deductions enacted by the TCJA that are scheduled to expire after 2025.

Joe Biden wants to limit total itemized deductions so the reduction in tax liability per dollar of deduction does not exceed 28%, which means taxpayers in tax brackets higher than 28% will face limited itemized deductions. He would also like to phase out the 20% pass-through deduction for income over \$400,000.

Capital Gains

Current law has the top tax rate for capital gains and qualified dividends at 20% in addition to a 3.8% net investment income tax.

Trump wants to index capital gains for inflation, reduce the capital gains tax rate and enact a capital gains tax holiday that eliminates capital gains taxes for a yet-to-be-identified period.

Joe Biden endorses removing the preference for capital gains and qualified dividends for income over \$1 million by taxing them at ordinary rates.

The net investment income tax remains.

Tax Credits

Current law says a child with an individual taxpayer identification number cannot be claimed for the Child Tax Credit but can be claimed for the \$500 other dependent credit. A taxpayer with an individual taxpayer identification number is eligible to claim the Child Tax Credit and the \$500 other dependent credit.

The maximum CTC is \$2,000. This amount is scheduled to revert to the pre-TCJA amount of \$1,000 after 2025.

The maximum child- and dependent-care credit is \$1,200.

Workers older than 65 who do not have a qualifying child are not eligible for the Earned Income Tax Credit.

There is no tax credit for first-time homebuyers.

There's also no tax credit for renters.

Donald Trump will require a dependent to have a Social Security number to be eligible to be claimed for the \$500 other dependent credit and require a taxpayer to have a Social Security number to claim both the CTC and the \$500 other child dependent credit.

He also wants to extend the \$2,000 CTC enacted by the TCJA that is scheduled to expire after 2025.

Joe Biden wants to raise the CTC to \$8,000 for one child and \$16,000 for two or more children for taxpayers with income up to \$125,000 per year. The credit phases out for income between \$125,000 and \$400,000 per year.

Expand the EITC to workers older than 65 who do not have a qualifying child.

Enact a \$5,000 tax credit for family caregivers of people who have certain physical and cognitive needs.

Enact a refundable, advanceable tax credit of up to \$15,000 for first-time homebuyers.

Enact a renter's tax credit, designed to reduce rent and utilities to 30% of income for low-income individuals and families who make too much money to qualify for a Section 8 voucher.

Estate and Gift Tax

Current law for 2020 has the estate and gift tax exemption at \$11,580,000. This amount is scheduled to revert to the pre-TCJA indexed amount of approximately \$5.8 million after 2025.

Transfers of appreciated property at death get a stepped-up basis.

Donald Trump favors extending the higher estate and gift tax exemption enacted by the TCJA that is scheduled to expire after 2025.

Joe Biden wants to eliminate stepped-up basis on transfers of appreciated property at death.

Regardless of who wins, you will want to be informed and prepared on the tax front and how it may affect your financial plan. What preparation are you doing now? We'd like to help and give you Clear Direction for Retirement®. Come see us, call us or visit us on the web. We always like making a new friend. Stay safe out there.



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STAGE RIGHT of Texas

Praying for a Christmas Miracle with PETER PAN taking Flight at last!

By: Carolyn Corsano Wong Photos created by: Sara Preisler and Adam Isbell



Madison Mapes as Peter Pan

We told you July, then September and finally December. We're praying the third time is the charm! The magical musical *Peter Pan* is scheduled to take flight Dec. 4-20, 2020. The show is full of imagination sure to thrill and entertain audiences of all ages. Memorable songs include "Never Never Land", "I Won't Grow Up" and "I'm Flying" and just like the song says, Peter Pan will be flying. This production is directed by multiple Montie Award winner and audience favorite: Sara Preisler. Sara directed *A Charlie Brown Christmas*, *Glitz - The Little Miss Christmas Pageant Musical*, *Cinderella* and was co-director of the musical *Annie*.

Peter and his mischievous fairy sidekick, Tinkerbell, visit the nursery of the Darling chil-



Wyatt Langehennig as Capt Hook



Christina Sato as Mrs. Darling



The Darling children-Katie Kowalik, Keagan Pepper and Austin Krueger



Parker Manning as Liza

dren late one night and, with a sprinkle of pixie dust, begin a magical journey across the stars that none of them will ever forget. In the adventure of a lifetime, the travelers come face to face with a ticking crocodile, a fierce Indian tribe, a band of bungling pirates and, of course, the villainous Captain Hook.

As of this writing we don't know if social distancing recommendations will still be in effect so we haven't opened tickets up for sale.

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Paige Manning as Tiger Lily

When we do, sales will be made by calling so we can fit as many folks safely in the Crighton as possible while still adhering to distancing requirements. It is likely that the 6' rule will still be recommended in December and if that is the case we will need to shuffle the tickets already bought for the show into new seats with the restriction of every other row be an empty one. Please keep up with the latest about ticket sales on our website www.stage-right.org or call the box office 936-441-7469. Clap your hands if you believe!! ♦

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Online with Dock Line

How to Win at Social Media: The Exact 5 Strategies Used by the Top Brands and Influencers in the World

There are 3.8 billion social media users in the world today. If you own a business, you can bet that nearly all your current and potential customers are on at least one social media platform. By now, you've been told by everyone that your business needs to be on social media sites like Facebook and Instagram, among others, and you likely have a page on one or more of those platforms.

However, you've probably seen how these sites have taken away much of the organic reach of businesses and brands, forcing them to invest in paid social media advertising to get in front of their potential customers. Many business owners think organic reach is just about dead.

Well, we're here to tell that it hasn't. In fact, if you follow the right strategies you can grow your organic reach and build up a special media presence that works every day to grow your business and bring in new leads. The biggest influencers and brands in the world are growing massive audiences organically by following some simple methods and best practices.

Without further ado, here are the five strategies that will guarantee organic social media growth that results in growing your business.

1. Post more than you think you should.

Many business owners have built a belief that social media can't do much for their business. At least, not organic social media. Sure, you can pour thousands of dollars a month into Facebook and Instagram ads and you might see some results if you know what you're doing. However, organic results from social media are not easy to come by for businesses or brands.

That is, unless you post the right kind

of content...and you post often - much more than you probably think. Influencers like Gary Vaynerchuck post up to seven times a day and big brands like Starbucks and Nike post once a day or once every two days. Most small businesses post much less than that. Maybe you can relate. The point is, if you aren't getting the engagement you want out of social media, you probably aren't posting enough.

2. Be consistent for 2 years (more like 5 years).

An even bigger challenge for businesses wanting to use social media as a growth strategy is consistency. Most businesses create a page for their business and post a lot early on, but begin to post less and less over time, sometimes stopping altogether. Trust is a powerful force in online marketing, and the best way to build trust is to show up consistently for a while. You need to create an expectation for your followers and meet that expectation every time.

Whenever you decide to post and however often you do it, keep doing it the same way. Do it for at least two years and you'll see your social media channels become a reliable marketing tool for your business. Do it for five years and you'll grow to become a trusted authority in your industry.

3. Document. Don't Create.

You may be wondering, "what am I supposed to post every day (or several times a day)?" Trying to come up with the most beautiful, attractive, viral-worthy post every time you post is exhausting. You don't have the time for that and you likely aren't a bottomless well of creative content. But you might be...

Gary Vanerchuck, a successful online mar-

keter and influencer that we mentioned above, gives this simple, yet powerful advice: Document. Don't create. Don't try to create something out of thin air every time you post. Just document your personal journey in your business. Post daily with a challenge you're facing or wisdom that is helping you. Share your successes and failures. Give advice. Help others.

A way to summarize this simply is to just be yourself. Be genuine and post every day about your journey. You could go live for a few minutes a day on Facebook or Instagram or just share a couple of sentences about your experiences. Yes, you'll feel a bit uncomfortable early on, but that will fade away as you get better and people start following you. People love connecting with authenticity.

4. Give, give, give, ask.

As a business owner, it can be tempting to talk about your products or services all the time and try to sell with your posts. This is a huge mistake and it's the fastest way to get people to ignore you on social media. Instead, give away value when you post without asking for anything in return. Help out your audience. Post valuable content that will improve their lives. Post industry expertise that people would pay for elsewhere. Share what you know freely. Then, every now and then you can ask for something.

The best way to sell anything organically online is to provide value first, then ask for the sale later. When it comes to social media, you need to post value-based content at least three times for every post that asks for something - like an offer for your product or service.

5. Hire a social media manager.

If you're a business owner and you're reading all of this, you may be thinking that you simply don't have the time to invest in social media; at least not the kind that will actually grow successfully organically. Yes, you need to be on social media if you want to grow into the future. All of your customers are hanging out somewhere in these online channels. But, you don't have to do it yourself. One of the best investments you can make when it comes to marketing your business is to hire a social media manager.

A social media manager can post for you every day. They can create all the content for your social media pages and manage all the communication from your posts and messages. It's a great investment to make for the future of your business.

At Dock Line, we have an entire team of social media managers that help local businesses grow online. If you would like to find out how we could help your business grow through social media, let us know! Not only do we post beautiful content that your audience will love, but we study your market to post at the most optimal times, constantly test and tweak content so it gets maximum engagement, and nurture followers into leads and customers, all while you focus on the parts of your business you do best.

If you're interested to learn more about Dock Line's Social Media Services for small businesses, send us an email today at ozzy@docklinemagazine.com. You'll be glad you did! ♦



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Aquatic Plant Management on Lake Conroe

It Takes a Village



A cage with White Water Lilly.

For more than 40 years, aquatic vegetation has been a matter of concern on Lake Conroe. The San Jacinto River Authority (SJRA) and Texas Parks and Wildlife (TPWD) are close and collaborative partners in the on-going effort to manage aquatic vegetation in the lake. Though spearheaded by SJRA and TPWD, the

program has grown because of the ongoing contributions of many area stakeholders representing multiple interests. The Seven Coves Bass Club and Lake Conroe Association in particular have been staunch supporters of aquatic plant management and have had a major influence on the program's growth.

The idea of "management" within the context of aquatic plants, includes both native as well as exotic (i.e. non-native/invasive) species. The overall objective is to maximize the amount of native plants while limiting exotic species to an acceptable level. As eloquently described by TPWD Fisheries Biologist, Alice Best, in last month's issue of Dock Line, these exotic plants can be very aggressive, often out-compete native plants for existence, cause a multitude of undesirable consequences and upset the delicate balance of the natural ecology. One of the most significant and impactful effects of exotic plants is that they can form such large, dense mats that they can severely limit recreational opportunities on the lake. In fact, certain plants can become so entangled in boat propellers that they can render vessels virtually inoperable. Though well intended, certain methods used to control exotic species often also reduce the amount of native vegetation.



Bull Rush from the Native Plant Nursery.

Shortly after the reservoir filled in 1973, the exotic plant, water hyacinth, was first identified. Over the years, other exotic species have found their way into Lake Conroe including giant salvinia, crested floating heart, and hydrilla. Historically, the two most troublesome in terms of the labor and expense to control are hydrilla and giant salvinia. Once established, eradication is simply not a realistic objective. Therefore, a sustained



White Water Lilly from the Native Plant Nursery.

maintenance program is essential. Both SJRA and TPWD have active exotic-plant treatment programs and each dedicates an extensive amount of time and resources, including experienced, licensed applicators to help fight the battle. A truly successful management program must be equally as committed to native plant restoration as it is to exotic species control. Therefore, SJRA and TPWD are both fully committed to this vitally important aspect of the overall aquatic plant management program. As previously acknowledged as being a major stakeholder and partner in the quest to maintain native plant species, several years ago, the Seven Coves Bass Club constructed an aquatic plant nursery on the SJRA Lake Conroe campus. The Nursery, which consists of eight individual water-proofed wooden troughs, is used to grow a variety of native plant species. Plants grown in the nursery are propagated from clippings of "mother plants" that have been well established in the reservoir from previous planting efforts. Those grown in the nursery in any given year can be transferred back into the reservoir the following year in a continuous, self-sustaining cycle. Each year an estimated 600 plants are transferred from the nursery back into Lake Conroe. Transplanting excursions often include the assistance of volunteers passionate about preserving the overall health of the lake's ecology.

In 2020, SJRA decided to try something new and create a living nursery test and demonstration site at the west end of the Lake Conroe Dam. For this, project staff chose to plant Bull Rush, Water Willow, Pickerelweed, and White Water Lilly. The test site will give SJRA a chance to monitor



Pickerelweed from the Native Plant Nursery.



Water Willow thriving on the shoreline in Caney Creek.



Vallisneria being harvested in the field for propagation in the Native Plant Nursery.

the growth patterns of each species thus providing insights on survival and proliferation rates once plants have been re-introduced into the natural shoreline of the lake. This living nursery will also serve as erosion control, provide suitable fish habitat, create educational opportunities, and act as a secondary nursery for future clippings and propagation. From the beginning, the plan has been to establish native plant colonies on the north end of the lake that, once established, would reproduce through mechanisms such as seeds and fragmentation, allowing plants to migrate to and populate other areas of the shoreline.

A stakeholder meeting was held on September 10th to allow for an open forum to discuss the current status of aquatic plants in Lake Conroe, the effectiveness of control and restoration efforts, and to outline a unified path forward.

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



Living Nursery Site at the Lake Conroe Dam (Shane + Jace).



Living Nursery Site at the Lake Conroe Dam

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, like SJRA on Facebook @SanJacintoRiverAuthority, follow us on Twitter @SJRA_1937, find us on Instagram @sanjacintoriverauthoritySJRA, or connect with us on LinkedIn @San Jacinto River Authority. ♦

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CATCH *Em* CLEAN *Em* & EAT *Em*

Pasta With Pumpkin Alfredo Sauce

Kosher salt
2 9-ounce packages cheese tortellini
1 tablespoon unsalted butter
1 small shallot, finely chopped
1/2 cup canned pure pumpkin
Pinch of freshly grated nutmeg
1 1/4 cups heavy cream
1/4 cup grated Parmesan cheese
Freshly ground pepper
Chopped fresh parsley

Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil. Add the tortellini and cook as the label directs. Reserve 1/2 cup cooking water, then drain the pasta.

Meanwhile, heat the butter in a skillet over

medium-high heat. Add the shallot and cook, about 2 minutes. Add the pumpkin and nutmeg and cook, stirring, 1 minute. Stir in the cream and bring to a low boil. Reduce the heat to medium low; simmer, stirring, until slightly thickened, about 5 minutes. Stir in the cheese and cook until thick.

Add the tortellini to the skillet and toss with the sauce, adding some of the reserved cooking water. Serve with more cheese and parsley.



Caramel Apple Bars

1/2-cup cold butter
1 (17.5-ounce) pouch oatmeal cookie mix
1 egg
1 cup peeled and chopped apple
3/4-cup caramel topping
1/4-cup all-purpose flour

Heat oven to 350 degrees. Coat a 9-x-13-inch pan with cooking spray.

In a large bowl, cut butter into cookie mix. Stir in egg until mixture is crumbly. Reserve 1-1/2 cups of cookie mixture. Press remaining cookie mixture in bottom of prepared pan. Bake for 15 minutes.

Sprinkle apple over the cookie crust. In a small bowl, mix caramel topping and flour and drizzle over apples. Then crumble the reserved cookie mix over caramel layer and bake 20 to 25 minutes. ♦



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Dominating Performance

Article by: Mark Hooker
Photos courtesy of: Debbie Pietsch

To say that the MISD Fishing Team had a Dominating Performance on Lake Conroe would be an understatement. The combined squad from both Montgomery High School and Lake Creek High School, had 5 teams in the Top 10, out of 139 individual teams from 23 Houston Area High Schools.

Leading the way for MISD was last year's Angler's of the Year for MISD, Fallon Clepper

fish, allowed the team to increase their limit by almost 4 pounds, sealing both their 2nd place finish, as well as helping the MISD Fishing Team to a resounding First Place finish. Being that their official time to stop fishing in the Texas High School Bass Association Tournament was 3:00, that's an impressive lesson for all of us, compete hard until the end.

Rounding out the top three weights and

Brandon Warren, placing 8th with 8.34 pounds, and Jack Haag and Connor Callihan coming in 9th with 7.54 pounds. This is only the third time in the history of the MISD Fishing Team, that the Squad had 5 teams in the Top 10.

Overall, the fishing was extremely tough on the 139 Teams, as over 50 percent of the field did not catch a keeper Bass, which on Lake Conroe is 16 inches. Anytime it takes less than



& Wyatt Ford. This "Dynamic Duo" captured 2nd Place with a 5 Bass Limit of 16.13 pounds. Their "Local Legend" Captain Julian Clepper reported, "the kids caught them fishing slow in 3 to 12 feet of water using numerous soft plastic techniques. The bite was very tough, as we only caught 6 keepers on this day." Clepper went on to say that "the kids fished hard all day, and Fallon caught their biggest fish that culled out a smaller fish at 2.47." That cull of a smaller

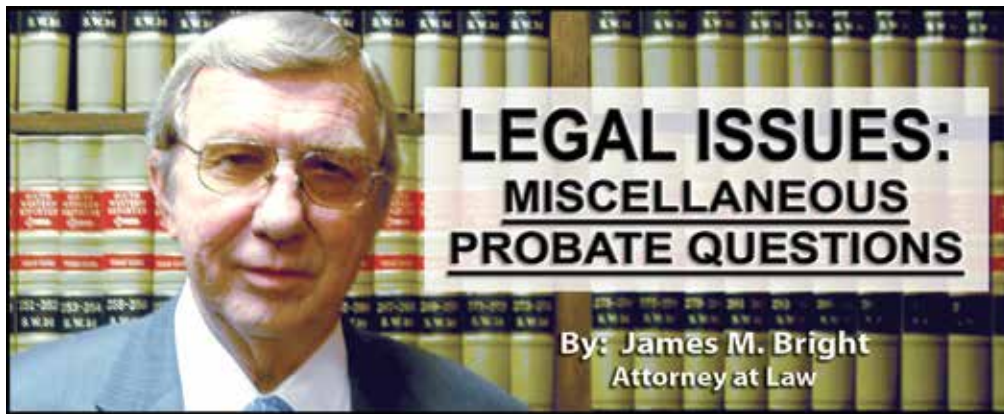
places for MISD, which is how the overall Team Champion is decided, were Jack Middlebrook and Kaden Harmann coming in 5th with a total weight of 11.37. They were followed closely by Rylan Mitchell and Tyler Gerner landing in the 6th spot with 10.90 pounds. This combined total of 38.40 pounds easily outdistanced the 2nd Place school by 6 pounds.

As mentioned above, we had two other teams in the Top 10 in Andrew Wilson and

10 pounds to be in the Top Ten, you know it was tough conditions!

Overall, the MISD Fishing Team had 40 Teams competing for scholarships and prizes. The next stop on the THSBA Houston Division Trail is Lake Somerville on October 10th. It will be there, that the MISD Fishing Team will look to expand their lead, and accomplish one of the three Team goals for the season, another Conference Title. ♦





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

The following is a list of common questions that are encountered in my law practice regarding estates and probate of Wills. The answers may vary depending upon circumstances of that particular client, but are offered as a guideline for situations which are not extraordinary.

What is the difference in legal title and equitable title and how do the differences relate to probate of estates? As applied to real property issues, equitable title gives the right to possess or use the real property, while legal title shows the person or persons on the deed. A common way that these dramatically different rights appear in probate is when one person (such as a surviving spouse) receives a life estate and remaindermen (children of the

decendent or others) receive legal title. The result of this situation is that remaindermen hold legal title to real property that the surviving spouse has a right to occupy or possess. Technically, the remaindermen (children or other) can sell legal title, although the property would be encumbered by a life estate. In practice, the remaindermen are not likely to find a buyer who is willing to accept those conditions. As regards probate—these issues can be resolved by even a simple Will.

What are revocable life estate deeds (sometimes called “Lady Bird Deeds”)? This is a deed where a person grants a life estate in property to himself and grants legal title to his children or others. This instrument differs from a life estate in the fact that the grantor retains for himself the right to sell or encumber the property during his lifetime. The so-called

“Lady Bird Deed” is often used in anticipation of application for Medicaid benefits. It attempts to transfer the property to descendants without making it subject to Medicaid reimbursement after the death of the grantor. These deeds, if done, must be with a full understanding that there may be title company objections. It should also be noted that if this vehicle is initiated as a shield to Medicaid Recovery, the Internal Revenue Service has a “look-back” period of 60 months.

It is also important to note that laws may change so that the so-called “Lady Bird Deed” may not be effective for its intended purpose.

Does a probate of a Will automatically transfer title to real property? The answer to this question depends upon the type of probate proceeding done. If the Will was probated as a Muniment of Title, then the answer is yes. Transfer of title to real property in Texas is essentially complete upon the filing of a certified copy of the Will together with a certified copy of the Court’s Order in the Real Property Records of the county where the real property is located.

If there were debts to be paid or other cause that an administration be opened, then transfer of title to real property is **NOT** automatic. Transfer of title to real property in this instance would be accomplished by signing and filing an executor or administrator’s deed. An executor or administrator’s deed is a deed wherein the grantor is also the executor or administrator that has been authorized by the

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Court to represent the estate of the decedent. The executor's deed transfers title of the real property to the beneficiaries under the Will.

An example might be, husband dies; surviving wife is the executor and the beneficiary. In this case, wife, in her capacity as executor, signs a deed transferring husband's ownership interest in real property to herself in her individual capacity.

This is an often overlooked duty of the executor. Being authorized by the court to act for the estate does not automatically transfer title to real property; it only gives the executor the authority to act.

The questions answered above cannot begin to answer all of the questions as they relate to your particular loved one's estate. You are encouraged to have an experienced attorney of your choosing answer questions as they relate to you or your loved ones as well as to prepare documents which express your wishes at the time of your death.

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. ♦



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TPWD Angler Recognition Program: Making Memories for a Lifetime

By: Mike Gore, Fisheries Technician
Texas Parks and Wildlife Department
College Station – Houston Inland Fisheries Management District

"Many go fishing all their lives without knowing that it is not fish they are after." - Henry David Thoreau

As I am sitting in front of my computer today, I started reminiscing about the times my parents took us fishing. We enjoyed many long hours on the water, bass fishing at Sam Rayburn or trying to catch white bass at Lake Livingston. Spending time with my whole family outdoors are the childhood experiences I remember the most. Was it the hunting or fishing or was it the feeling of togetherness that I remembered with such fondness? I know it was the latter. It was the feeling of knowing that we had taken time out of our busy lives to be together; to share and make memories that would last a lifetime. Now, as a father and husband, I am aware of the fishing experiences that made my childhood filled with joy. I try to impart the same experiences to my family, especially my kids.

I caught my first Largemouth Bass on a black and white Heddon Lucky 13 Hula Popper on Sam Rayburn. A school of bass broke the surface chasing shad. I had never seen anything like it before. I sat in awe. Action was fast and furious for a few moments. The bass went down, but my dad turned to me and said that they would come back up at any moment, and to throw my lure as close as I could to the school. When the fish returned, I did just as I was told, hooking up with my first bass. It was only 12 inches long, but at 11 years old, it was big to me. The next few moments were even more important to me and are the vision I see every time I think about that moment in my life.

My dad removed the hook from the mouth of the fish. He was excited that I had just caught my first fish and desperately wanted me to get another before the school went deep again. He turned to me and said, "Hurry up and throw back out there..." His sentence stopped. On the word "throw" the fish, my first bass ever, slipped from his hands and returned to the water. I was devastated and upset. I did not get to admire my first bass. However, the hurt quickly faded and it has become one of my most cherished memories.

I could go on and write several stories about my experiences in the outdoors. My point in telling this story is to emphasize the quality time and memories that can be made on family trips.

Now COVID-19 is forcing people to find new things to do, and I have a suggestion that can create lasting memories for you as an individual or your family. The Texas Parks and Wildlife Angler Recognition Program recognizes anglers catches for waterbody and state records for every species of fish. Now this may sound like a hard goal to reach, but many waterbodies have never had a record application submitted! This means that many waterbody records are within easy reach. Before going out to your local lake or pond, go to the Texas Parks and Wildlife Angler Recognition page, <https://tpwd.texas.gov/fishboat/fish/programs/fishrecords/rules/> to explore

how you can participate.

There are many different ways an individual can challenge themselves and make their fishing trip even more memorable by qualifying for the Angler Recognition Program: State or Waterbody Records by weight, Waterbody Records by tackle type (rod & reel, fly fishing, etc.), First Fish Awards, and Big Fish Awards. You can even practice catch and release with Catch and Release Records by length. Categories exist not only for public waterbodies, but private waters as well. Imagine adding a fish award to the memory of beloved family fishing trip. It would be priceless!

The Junior Angler Recognition Program started in 2003. It is similar to the Angler Recognition Program. You must be 16 years old or younger to participate. It was developed to encourage adults to take a kid fishing and motivate kids to ask someone to take them fishing. The Junior Angler Recognition Program provides an opportunity for a young angler to be recognized separately from adult anglers and be listed in the record book in a standalone division. Junior Angler Records are displayed on the Texas Parks and Wildlife website. Just because it's for young anglers, doesn't mean the categories are any lighter. Kids can qualify for Junior State Records, Junior Waterbody Records, Big Fish Awards, First Fish Awards, Outstanding Angler, and others.



Angler Recognition Application



Angler Recognition Certificates



Since the Junior Angler Recognition Program is not so well known, many of the categories have not been filled yet for many waterbodies. Parents can help a child get as many records as they can or catch the biggest fish out of any waterbody of their choice. It is a great way to spend quality time with a child. Any species of fish qualifies, whether it is as small as a Golden Shiner or as big as a Small-mouth Buffalo. To qualify, a fish must weigh at least 2 oz., otherwise many of the rules for the normal Angler Recognition Program apply to the Junior Angler Recognition Program. Junior Anglers receive a certificate in the mail of the achievement and will be able to see their name on the Texas Parks and Wildlife website if they qualify for a record. Both of my kids have waterbody records at a local pond in College Station, Texas. My son, 7 years old at the time, even qualified for a Junior State Record with a Red-bellied Pacu he caught on a worm. His sister caught her record fish at 3 years of age. Let me tell you, there is nothing that will make a parent prouder than to see their child grinning from ear to ear knowing that they had just accomplished something on their own. The days could not go fast enough with the anticipation of getting those certificates in the mail.

Here's some guidelines before you head out to your favorite fishing spot to pursue a potential record catch:

- 1) Look at the records for that waterbody you are going to visit. <https://tpwd.texas.gov/fishboat/fish/programs/fishrecords/record-search.phtml>

- 2) Print an application and participation brochure for the rules. <https://tpwd.texas.gov/fishboat/fish/programs/fishrecords/scales.phtml>

- 3) Take a camera or phone that takes good pictures to capture photo evidence of your fish.

- 4) Take a measuring device (ruler, tape measure, etc.) to get a length and girth of the fish. Girth measurement is the circumference around the biggest part of the fish's belly.

- 5) If you have a record fish by weight, you'll need to find a place that has a certified scale to weigh your fish. You'll need the date it was certified, and by whom for the application. The most common place to find a certi-



Certification process of a potential waterbody record by TPWD staff at a local fishing event



*Junior Waterbody
Record Redear
sunfish*



*Junior Waterbody
Record & Junior
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fied scale is a local meat market. Certified scales listed with Texas Parks and Wildlife can be found at: <https://tpwd.texas.gov/fishboat/fish/programs/fishrecords/scales.phtml>

- 6) Fill out the application for your catch according to the procedures in the brochure. If you have any questions call the fisheries biologist for your area, and they will be glad to guide you through any questions you may have to complete the application.

Take the time and take a child out to create some great memories!

For information on the Angler Recognition Program go to <http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/fishboat/fish/programs/fishrecords/>. For additional questions, contact our office by phone at (979) 272-1430, or by email at mike.gore@tpwd.texas.gov or alice.best@tpwd.texas.gov. Also, visit us on Facebook at <https://facebook.com/TPWInlandFisheriesCollegeStationHouston>. ♦

Article and photos
by Bronwyn Clear,
Certified Texas
Master Naturalist



Heron bring bigger catches to shore and stab them to death. This makes fish easier to swallow, but Herons have been known to choke to death on a large catch!



Great Blue Heron – The Really Big Bird!

One of the most splendid and fierce birds around our local waterways is the Great Blue Heron. Their size and coloring give them their name. Great Blues can grow to an enormous height of 4-1/2 feet tall with a wingspan up to 6-1/2 feet, but a weight of only 4 to 7 lbs. Their coloring is black, white, and grey with hints of blue. During springtime they have a shaggy look with long plumes down their shoulders, fronts, and behind their heads. In flight the Great Blue is recognized by long trailing legs,



Look at those gams!! Drying and cooling off.



The Great Blue Heron. 4-1/2 feet tall with a wingspan of 6-1/2 feet, but a weight of only 4 to 7 lbs!

a tucked S-shaped aerodynamic neck, and slow graceful beating wings. And if a Great Blue is surprised, it flies off making a ferocious growling honk!

In East Texas the Heron rookeries are usually high in tall pine trees, but never far from the water. Their nests are made of loose sticks and twigs, and are about 3 feet in diameter. Females lay around 3 to 6 light blue eggs in a clutch, and generally produce only one spring-

time clutch each year. Both parents take turns incubating the eggs and feeding the young, requiring almost 2 months of hard work before the nestlings can fly.

The Great Blue Heron is a true carnivore and can hunt prey day or night due to special photoreceptors in its eyes. Fresh fish are their preference, but they have been known to eat rodents, crabs, and even baby alligators! These birds are found near most bodies of fresh or



Great Blues constantly need to repair their loosely made stick nests.

salt water, and occasionally in roadside ditches. Great Blues have even been known to raid backyard goldfish ponds! They are long-legged waders and can stand like statues, waiting patiently to snatch small fish hiding around their tall legs. Or from the side banks a Great Blue will swoop down, grab a much larger fish, carry it to land, and stab it to death with its dagger beak. Once the fish stops wiggling there is less chance of choking on it, but a bird occasionally does die by choking on too large a fish! Therefore, these birds always eat fish headfirst to

prevent having them get stuck in their throats. Make no mistake, these birds are relentless stone-cold predators!

Learn more about the incredible nature in our area by joining a chapter of the Texas Mas-

ter Naturalist organization. To find a chapter close to you, or to read about the state program, go online to www.txmn.org. Volunteer and get involved! ♦



During breeding season in springtime, their long plumes create a shaggy look.



Hérons are long-legged waders that slowly stalk smaller prey in shallow water.

WHAT EVERY WILDLIFE REHABILITATOR WANTS YOU TO KNOW

By: Lisa Wolling, Executive Director

As a wildlife rehabilitator, one quickly learns that educating the public is a large part of the services we provide. When people bring animals to our intake center, they are often curious about what we do and how they can help animals. There are also many misconceptions about wildlife rehabilitation in general. This month's article will try to address these topics.

First, here is a little background information about wildlife rehabilitators in general:

- In almost all cases, wildlife rehabilitators are completely unpaid and unfunded. Many of us work at "real" jobs to earn a living (unrelated to rehab "work"). We pay for most, if not all, of the expenses of caring for the animals we take in out of our own pockets. Donations at the time an animal is dropped off with a rehabber are very much needed and appreciated. Anything helps!

- Rehabbers will generally ask the public to bring animals to them. Please be understanding of this request. Most rehabbers have many animals in their care at any given time which require frequent feedings and attention. Time spent running around in the car picking up animals is time taken away from the animals already in care.

- Rehabbers do not have unlimited resources and/or space for animals. Some can only take certain species. Most will get to the point that they are completely overwhelmed and cannot take in any more animals at times. If a rehabber refers you to other resources, it is not because they do not care about the animal. It is actually because they want the best care for that animal; that may mean it needs to go to somebody else who has more time and space to properly care for that animal.

- In Texas, as in almost any other state, wildlife rehabilitators are required to have state and/or federal permits (issued by Texas Parks & Wildlife and U.S. Fish and Wildlife), and they are also required to work within the rules and regulations set forth by those organizations. We all are required to obey those rules, at the peril of having our permits taken away if we do not follow them.

- All training and continuing education rehabbers have is obtained on our own time, at our own expense. That is also a requirement for obtaining and retaining ones permit, although once again we receive no funding or assistance to help pay for it.

- Wildlife rehabilitators have a lot of expertise and knowledge, but we are not licensed veterinarians. There are limits as to what a rehabber can realistically do, both from a medical standpoint as well as the fact that we are dealing with wild animals. Treatment

that might be possible to do for a pet is not necessarily possible for wildlife, especially in the cases of adult animals (such as deer, coyotes, bobcats, foxes, and raccoons). Sadly, sometimes helping a wild animal is not possible. While many of us are fortunate to have veterinarians who will assist us, we generally pay for these services out of pocket. Thankfully, some veterinarians will offer rehabbers discounted services.

- Please bear in mind that rehabbers are often overwhelmed, overworked, and sleep deprived. We are on call 7 days a week, 365 days a year. Animal emergencies do not take vacations, and most of us do not either. Please be understanding if we seem harried and exhausted. We generally are.

Generally, people who are seeking help for an animal they have found have a love for wildlife as well. We often get asked how people can help, or how they can get involved. We understand that not many people can make the commitment to be a hands-on rehabber, but there are many other ways you can be a friend to wildlife, as well as to wildlife rehabilitators. Here are just a few:

- Consider volunteering with a rehabber or at a rehab center. This can include helping hands-on with animals in care, answering phones, help with animal transport, help with fundraising (VITALLY IMPORTANT!), or help with administrative tasks.

- Are you handy? Offer help with building of cages, nest boxes, etc. This kind of assistance can be invaluable to both new rehabbers just getting started as well as to rehab centers in need of more caging on site. Scout projects are always welcome too!

- Do you own rural property? We are always looking for release spots for rehabilitated wildlife animals. As our county continues to be developed, finding safe release locations is becoming more of a challenge.

- Help us out if you can by donating. Direct donations can be made at www.ftwl.org. You can also support our organization through AmazonSmile and Kroger Community Rewards (details also found on our website). Many corporations offer matching donations for direct donations, payroll deductions and/or volunteer hours.

- If you have a cat or cats, please consider keeping them inside. Free-roaming cats



Injured animals often require around-the-clock care. Top left: bald eagle with lead poisoning; top right: baby squirrel with a broken leg; bottom left: baby rabbit with a broken leg; bottom right: armadillo with dog-bite injuries.

kill or injure millions of wildlife animals every year. We get many, many songbirds, squirrels, rabbits, opossums, and even young owls and hawks that have been attacked by cats. Many of these animals have non-survivable injuries.

- Please do not use rodenticides (rat or mouse poison). Even with bait stations, these poisons often affect non-target animals such as owls, hawks, raccoons, squirrels, and foxes. Wildlife and even domestic dogs and cats can be inadvertently poisoned, either by direct ingestion or by ingesting a rat or mouse that has eaten the bait.

- Be mindful of other toxins, such as pesticides, fertilizers, etc. Many animals ingest insects, or drink from run off, and they then ingest the toxins as well. Songbirds and screech owls are particularly at risk from pesticides.

- If you do find an animal that appears injured or orphaned, PLEASE call or email a rehab facility as soon as possible! In many cases, especially with baby animals and birds, it may be possible to reunite with their parents. Time is of the essence in these cases. We have helpful flowcharts on our website (www.ftwl.org)

and Facebook page that are species specific and give reuniting information. Reuniting baby animals with their natural parents can help to keep rehabbers from getting overwhelmed too quickly.

- Please do not "rehab via the internet". There is so much misinformation out there. Many animals we get require critical care when they first come in due to improper feeding and care. Please remember that a Google search does not qualify one to be a rehabber. Animals that are dehydrated, ill, emaciated, and/or hypothermic cannot digest food or formula, so feeding them can in fact kill them. Improper feeding can cause severe gastric upset as well as a host of other issues. For any animal found, warmth is the most important thing. Hydration should only be done with warmed Pedialyte (or other electrolyte-type of drink) given with a small syringe or eye dropper.

- The fastest way to get in touch with us is by emailing our help line at ftwl.help@gmail.com. This help line is monitored frequently, even when our center is not open. For rehabbers listed by county, help can also be found by checking <https://tpwd.texas.gov/huntwild/wild/rehab/list>, or by searching ahnow.org (put in your location, and then click on "wildlife emergency").

- Please do not set traps to relocate wildlife animals. This often results in orphaned



Many of the animals that rehabbers care for need frequent care and feeding. Top left: baby raccoon being bottle fed; top center: adult opossum; top right: fawn being bottle fed; bottom: three baby gray squirrels.



Some baby birds require feeding as frequently as every twenty minutes. From top left: baby wrens; top right: baby barred owls; bottom left: baby mockingbirds; bottom right: baby great horned owl.

babies being left behind. If you have nuisance wildlife issues, please reach out to a local rehabber for advice, or call an expert company such as 911 Wildlife or Skeedaddle Humane Wildlife Removal. These companies will not harm any animals, and they will assure no babies are left behind.

- If you can help us out with volunteering, cage building, or being a release spot, please email ftwl.center@gmail.com.

These are simple things everyone can do to help wildlife animals as well as your local wildlife rehabilitator. 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.

Details can be found at www.ftlw.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. For the time being, due to ongoing Covid concerns, our educational center remains closed. ♦

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