

TOWA

NOTE NEW
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Corpus Christi, TX 78418

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TOWA PRESIDENT'S REPORT

TOWA Board Reopens Search for Executive Director

Executive Director Duties Being Covered by Interim Executive Director Childs

Finding an executive director that fits the needs of TOWA is turning out to be more difficult than we expected.

Regrettably, our brief relationship with Lorraine Lawrence ended after the first three months, on May 20. The split was amicable. So once again, TOWA is searching for someone to handle the non-financial duties of the organization.

Primarily, we're looking for someone who is at least somewhat familiar with the outdoors world. Not just the hook-and-bullet segment but also the marketing aspects that we have neglected. We need a person who is capable of nurturing relationships with both communicators and our supporting members, while recruiting both. We need a diplomat who is helpful by nature and a self-starter by ambition.

And we need a solid communicator who has the organizational skills to manage time and people. We need someone who can write news releases and dedicate time to raising the profile of TOWA. We need an ambassador.

This is not a full-time job. But honestly, we're not sure what the time demands would be because the job description has changed so much since TOWA has achieved 501(c)6 status. Now that Burney and Valerie Brown at Professional Association Management Services have taken over the bookkeeping and other administrative duties, the ED job looks very different.

We need someone to keep the organiza-

tion current and relevant.

The board is currently examining several solutions that may either be short-range or long-term. Burney Brown at PAMS has a 30-year history of managing nonprofit organizations. And Burney has personally served as executive director for several of his client organizations. His personal interest in the purpose of those organization had little to do with the role he played; frankly, you don't have to be an outdoor writer to manage the books and membership or to organize a TOWA conference.

No, he would not design the conference programs; our communications committee can do that. But he might solicit meal sponsors or encourage more corporate participation in our annual gatherings.

Another possible solution is to expand some of Burney Brown's administrative duties and contract for the remainder of the ED responsibilities that would include membership recruitment, sponsorship acquisition, conference planning and the writing and dissemination of news releases. To this end, the board has contracted with Jonette Childs, conference chair, past president and L.A. Wilke Award winner, to serve as Interim Executive Director. She may apply for the ongoing position, once the board determines what that position looks like, and other interested candidates are invited to step forward.

At this point, the addition of an expanded administrative role for PAMS is just an idea

that could reduce the duties of a TOWA executive director, who the board believes should be the face and membership liaison of the organization.

Part of the board's goals includes a revamped website and greater attention to our social media presence. Thanks to all who responded to our website poll through Survey Monkey, Susan and the board are hashing out the details of a Request for Proposal. This should go out soon to a list of prospective web designers.

We plan to use the Survey Monkey tool often and I encourage all of you to participate. The website survey included a couple questions about the newsletter also: We're looking at new ways to reach members and engage them in what has become a very top-down organization over the years.

It is our desire to highlight TOWA's assets by any means possible. This means we want prospective members and supporters to be aware of our deep and diverse talents. We also want them to know our proud history. Heck, we want our members to know our proud history.

We have much work to do. But we have some momentum behind us. Your input is always welcome and encouraged.

I'll leave you with a request for names of folks who might consider stepping into the new role of executive director. The name you suggest might be yours. Let's talk.

— David J. Sikes

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TOWA was formed in 1958 as a professional/social organization for those who communicate about hunting, fishing and other outdoor pursuits, as well as those in business and industry connected with the outdoors.

TOWA Mailing Address: Texas Outdoor Writers Association, c/o David Sikes, 15278 Caravel Drive, Corpus Christi, Texas 78418

2013 SPRING BOARD MEETING MINUTES

Texas Outdoor Writers Association Board Meeting Econo Lodge Inn by the Bay, Rockport, Texas — April 21, 2013

1. The meeting was called to order at 1:12 p.m. by John Goodspeed, Chairman of the Board. John welcomed guests Valerie and Burney Brown, Professional Association Management Services and Shannon Tompkins, Past TOWA President and L.A. Wilke Award winner.

2. The following officers, board members, members and committee chairs were present: David Sikes, President (2014); T.J. Greaney, President-Elect (2014); Lorraine Lawrence, Executive Director; Shane Townsend (2016), Treasurer; Peggy York (2015), Recording Secretary; Bob Hood (2015); Kendal Hemphill (2014); Lefty Ray Chapa (2016); Susan Ebert (2016); and Shannon Tompkins, member.

3. Kendal Hemphill made a motion to dispense with the reading of the minutes that was seconded by David Sikes. Motion carried.

4. Executive Directors Report: Lorraine Lawrence reported on the transition between Larry LeBlanc and herself. Lorraine has updated the TOWA website with current information and changes since the conference. Her plans are to contact the sponsors to ensure they are receiving what they need from TOWA and the sustaining members for future events such as breakouts or socially.

5. President David Sikes reported the bond processed through Tom Hewitt Insurance has been updated. There was additional discussion of hiring Burney Brown of Professional Association Management Services to provide monthly oversight/bookkeeping service. His services would include reports, databases and monthly services that include filing state and federal tax forms. Also to include a review of our finances going back to 2010. All of this for a one-time fee of \$1,900. Once the programs are set up and in place there will be a monthly fee of \$250 to process ongoing activity. A motion was made by David Sikes to hire Burney Brown and the firm of Professional Association Management Services that was seconded by T.J. Greaney. The board passed unanimously.

6. Burney Brown, Professional Association Management Services gave an overview of his report and how TOWA should proceed. His company will produce reports and then pass to Treasurer, Shane Townsend. Treasurers duties will continue as the position describes.

7. Old Business: Position Descriptions were discussed and Chairman John Goodspeed asked that each review their duties and report back to him. Susan Ebert suggested that an original document of the Constitution and Bylaws be maintained electronically where "Track Changes" can reflect any changes and when they were changed. All agreed this was a good idea.

8. New Business:

a. Standing Committees were discussed. The Bylaws state we have separate committees for the Annual Conference, Conference Program, Membership Audit, Ethics, Nominating and Promotions. It was determined these positions

are suggested and will be considered but not required. Each will be treated separately and as needed. Communications are part of the Executive Director duties. David can direct Lorraine to move forward on getting bids to update our website. And the Scholarship committee has been determined to be in compliance and can continue as usual.

b. The Dallas Safari Club convention will be January 9-12, 2014. TOWA has been invited to hold our annual meeting with theirs. It was determined we should attend only to see if we can benefit.

c. Board members missing scheduled meetings was discussed and the board determined the Bylaws do not need changing.

d. Burney Brown informed the board that any general or board member can be paid for their services such as editing and laying out the newsletter. This will be looked at in more detail after the website has been updated.

e. Website redesign is to be accomplished by Lorraine as part of her duties. Suggestions were offered and she will pursue the features that best suit our organization.

f. Policy and procedure for bid process to pursue along with website framework design will be drafted by Lorraine with a suspense date of May 31, 2013.

g. Shane Townsend gave an overview of his report previously emailed to the board members. A committee was formed consisting of Lorraine Lawrence, T.J. Greaney, Kendal Hemphill, John Goodspeed, and Cody Greaney with Shane as the facilitator. They will be meeting a half-day and producing a report document by May 31, 2013.

h. John Goodspeed reported a Bylaws error on page 47 of the directory. It states, as does the website, that the supporting member liaison is not a voting member of the board. These are both incorrect. Page 50 states this position is a voting member and will be corrected. This is simply an administrative error and does not need to be presented as a change.

9. Report of Standing Committees:

a. Site Committee: Jonette Childs is in Fredericksburg, Texas finalizing next year's conference. The dates are February 27, 28 & March 1. **(Editor's Note: The conference has been moved to New Braunfels.)**

b. EIC: Kendal Hemphill had nothing new to report.

c. Scholarship: John Goodspeed also reported no new activity.

e. Internet Media: Previously reported.

f. Applicant Screening: Bob Hood reported on new active member Rob Sawyer.

10. A motion was made by Kendal Hemphill to adjourn the meeting and seconded by Shane Townsend. Motion carried. The meeting adjourned at 4:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Peggy York, Recording Secretary



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Snows Fall Along Coast

Drought, changing landscape cited for record-low number of winter geese in the area
by Shannon Tompkins

Judges' Comments: Feature writing is often storytelling, as in relating an incident, event or subject to your friends over dinner, at a deer camp or the local coffee shop — not to mention favorite watering hole. The writers in this category did just that, enticing the reader with a series of stories that are both informative and poignant and gather our attention like a comet in the night sky. Tompkins, Sikes (second place), Winningham (third place) and Goodspeed (honorable mention) are master storytellers.

For millennia, patches of Texas' coastal prairies and marshes have each winter turned white as a blizzard of as many as a million snow geese tumbled from the sky at the end of their annual southern migration from summer homes in Arctic regions.

But during the past decade, the Texas coast, which along with Louisiana's coastal area traditionally wintered the entire mid-continent population of snow geese, has seen a steady decline in the number of these signature waterfowl spending the cold-weather months on our coastal plain, even as the continental population of the birds has reached record highs.

This year, waterfowl managers conducting an annual aerial count of geese wintering in Texas tallied the lowest number of "light" geese (snow, blue, Ross's) recorded since the survey began in 1970.

NOT A HUGE SURPRISE

During the Dec. 27-29 survey of the coastal zone from Louisiana border to the Lower Laguna Madre, trained observers counted just over 253,000 light geese, said Kevin Kraai, waterfowl program leader for the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department

That's down from this past winter's count of 631,000, the highest in a decade but still below the long-term average of 676,000. Only twice in the past 10 winters has the survey counted more than a half-million light geese.

This year's major plunge in the number of snow geese (the common term used to cover snow, blue and Ross's geese) wintering along the Texas coast was not a huge surprise to waterfowl managers or to the tens of thousands of waterfowlers for whom those wintering birds have for generations provided North America's premier goose hunting opportunities.

"We've been seeing a steady decline in the number of snow geese wintering on the coast and knew the drought was likely to make things worse," Kraai said. "It sure looks like that happened."

'HIGHLY ADAPTABLE'

The long-term slide in the number of snow geese wintering on the Texas coast has been triggered by a combination of human-caused changes in the landscape and the behavior of the birds.

"Snow geese have proven highly adaptable," said Kevin Hartke, TPWD waterfowl biologist for the central coast and one of the participants in the aerial survey counting wintering geese. "As the landscape has changed, they've changed their behavior to take advantage. They've really adapted to agricultural foods."

That adaptation worked to Texas' advantage this past century as rice production boomed on the Texas coastal prairie. Snow geese, which had traditionally feed almost exclusively on native vegetation found in coastal marshes and prairie wetlands,

switched diets to feed on waste rice and the green vegetation that grew in rice field's damp soil.

CHANGES IN AGRICULTURE

In the mid-1970s, more than a half-million acres of coastal prairie was in rice production, and more than a million snow geese wintered on the Texas coast.

From that peak in the '70s and '80s, rice production in Texas has steadily declined because of changes in agriculture policy and economics, falling to less than 200,000 acres in recent years. At the same time, Texas' fast-increasing population pushed development into previously rural parts of the prairie, further eroding land usable waterfowl habitat.

Coinciding with the shrinking of goose habitat in Texas and decreasing wintering populations, the birds found increasing habitat in other areas and shifted their winter quarters. Changes in farming and other land use practices places such as Arkansas, north Louisiana, Missouri, Kansas and other states to Texas' north gave the birds what they once had to fly to Texas to find.

For example, Arkansas, which 30 years ago wintered only a handful of snow geese, saw an explosion of rice production during the past couple of decades. Today, Arkansas holds about 1.3 million acres of rice and, according to a just-completed mid-winter survey of goose population in the state, is holding 1.48 million snow geese - five times as many snows as were counted on the Texas coast.

Snows are wintering in other areas they never even glanced at until a few years ago. During the recent mid-winter aerial survey of duck populations, TPWD biologists counted almost 30,000 snows wintering along the Sulphur River and upper Trinity River in northeast Texas, Kraai said.

"It makes good sense if you're a snow goose," Kraai said of the shift in where the geese spend their winters. "If you've got plenty to eat, plenty of open water and places to roost and you're not getting shot at, why would you go any farther?"

UNATTRACTIVE CONDITIONS

This autumn and winter, geese that followed their traditional behavior and migrated to the Texas coast were greeted with conditions that made their stay even less attractive, and almost certainly resulted in this year's record low number of wintering snows.

The drought that seared Texas during the past year greatly impacted food and roosting habitat for the birds. Reduced rice production, including reduced second-crop rice, meant less waste grain for the birds. Also, arriving geese found fewer shallow-water roosting areas.

Continued on Page Four

TOWA 2013 EIC CATEGORY 13 WINNER

Continued from Page Three

Good numbers of snow geese made their way to the Texas coastal plain in November and early December. And goose hunting success was strong on the scattered places holding decent habitat.

But the birds' arrival worried waterfowl managers. The dry conditions meant the gregarious birds would be heavily concentrated in small areas. A lack of abundant forage combined with cold temperatures could physically stress the birds.

DISEASE FEARED

Avian cholera, a bacteria, is always present in a few birds in a goose population but usually doesn't cause problems when geese are in good physical condition and have relatively clean water on which to roost.

But when birds are stressed and exposed to the bacteria, outbreaks of avian cholera can spread quickly in the densely concentrated goose flocks, killing thousands.

But the outbreaks have been small and isolated.

It seemed the number of snow geese on the Texas coast began dropping just ahead of Christmas. "It was like the birds got to the coast, bounced around looking for food and water, couldn't find what they wanted, and decided go looking for it elsewhere," Kraai said. "Just where 'elsewhere' is is a huge question mark."

The birds may have moved east, toward Louisiana where the drought had less impact and habitat conditions are better. Results of the late-December population survey support that theory.

HUNTING STILL GOOD

Despite its declining population of wintering snow geese, and even in the face of this year's record low number of birds, the Texas coast remains a major site for snow geese and snow goose hunting.

"Hunting success, according to the reports I've heard, has been good -there were good numbers of young birds, and that helps success," Kraai said. "It's not like there aren't any geese on the coast. It's just that there aren't as many and they aren't in as many places as they used to be."

That's something not likely to change any time soon.

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TOWA SUPPORTING MEMBER NEWS

The FoodSaver® GameSaver® Brand Introduces Titanium G800:

The Ultimate Vacuum Sealing System for Hunting & Fishing Enthusiasts Features Extra-Long, 15-inch Seal Strip; Capable of 100 Repetitive Single Seals

BOCA RATON, FLA. – Hunters, anglers and meat processors now have the ultimate vacuum sealing system to seal and store large amounts of game and fish with the introduction of the new FoodSaver® GameSaver® Titanium G800.

The heavy duty Titanium G800 is the first FoodSaver® GameSaver® model that features a 15-inch-long seal strip with two settings. In single sealing mode it can produce up to 100 repetitive seals with no waiting time. The double sealing option provides extra security with an added enclosure.

The Titanium G800 is the perfect machine for avid hunters and anglers who store large amounts of game and fish in the freezer. It's also ideal for meat processors and lodge owners who seal and store commercial quantities of game and fish. With the 15-inch-wide bag, large portions of meat, such as roasts or backstraps, need not be pared down. For smaller cuts of meat or fish, such as rainbow trout or panfish, Titanium also seals 8-inch- and 11-inch-wide bags.

Like all FoodSaver® vacuum sealing systems, Titanium removes air from the specially designed FoodSaver® bag and creates a quality, air-tight seal that keeps frozen food fresh up to five times longer than traditional storage methods.

A hunter who packages and freezes venison using traditional storage methods can expect the meat to stay fresh for up to three months. However, by using a FoodSaver® GameSaver® vacuum sealing system, frozen venison will stay fresh and provide a delicious meal up to 1 ½ years later. The same holds true for anglers packaging salmon or other fish like trout or grouper.

Built for durability and performance, the FoodSaver® GameSaver® Titanium G800 has an internal dual pump that provides more power than a single pump to pull air out and seal contents tightly. The system also includes a patented, removable drip tray to capture excess moisture and to make clean-up easy and convenient.

The extra-large, rubberized buttons and easy grip handles make the Titanium G800 simple to operate. The built-in bag cutter makes it easy and convenient to process large jobs. This heavy duty vacuum sealer also has internal storage for an extra bag roll.

The Titanium G800 is compatible with all FoodSaver® GameSaver® vacuum sealing bags, including the exclusive 15-inch-wide Heat Seal Rolls, the Heavy Duty Heat Seal Rolls, the Expandable Heat Seal Rolls and the DAM™ Bags, with a built-in, liquid blocking strip.

Other features of the FoodSaver® GameSaver® Titanium G800 vacuum sealing system include:

- Foam gasket that ensures a good vacuum seal
- Bag cutter on lid that slides across to cut bags at any length
- Seal button to seal rolls and create custom-sized bags
- Vacuum and seal button that vacuums, seals and shuts off automatically
- Accessory port for use with a vacuum hose (included) for all FoodSaver® brand containers and accessories

The FoodSaver® GameSaver® Titanium G800 will be available August 1, 2013 at Bass Pro Shops, Cabela's, Gander Mountain and Academy and has a suggested retail price of \$449 with a Limited Lifetime Warranty.

For more information, contact Steve Roth at (402) 437-6418 or steveroth@swansonrussell.com.

Please visit www.foodsaver.com and join us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/foodsaveroutdoors.



JUNE 2013 TOWA NEWSLETTER

BUSHNELL INTRODUCES A NEW LINE OF NATUREVIEW BINOCULARS

Overland Park, Kan. – Bushnell Outdoor Products, an industry-leader in high performance sports optics for 65 years, has introduced a new line of NatureView binoculars. Designed for wildlife and nature enthusiasts, the NatureView product line includes six binoculars, with a combination of porro and roof prism configurations and mid- and full-size models.



The NatureView series features three models in the classic porro design – 6x 30mm, 8x 42mm and 10x 42mm – as well as three models in the modern roof prism configuration – 8x 32mm, 8x 42mm and 10x 42mm. With BAK-4 prisms and fully multi-coated optics, the NatureView binoculars provide edge-to-edge image clarity and outstanding detail. The entire product family is constructed with environmentally friendly lead-free glass.

Fully waterproof and fog proof, the NatureView binoculars are protected with a durable rubber-armored housing that is designed to absorb shock and provide long-lasting protection in the field. With twist-up eyecups, adjustments can be made quickly, allowing nature observers to easily share binoculars.

| SKU | Configuration | Prism Type | Suggested Retail |
|--------|---------------|------------|------------------|
| 220630 | 6x 30mm | Porro | \$99.99 |
| 224208 | 8x 42mm | Porro | \$119.99 |
| 224210 | 10x 42mm | Porro | \$129.99 |
| 220832 | 8x 32mm | Roof | \$99.99 |
| 228042 | 8x 42mm | Roof | \$129.99 |
| 221042 | 10x 42mm | Roof | \$149.99 |

Bushnell Outdoor Products is a global manufacturer and marketer of branded consumer products. Headquartered in Overland Park, Kansas, the company sells its products worldwide under the Bushnell®, Bee Stinger, Butler Creek®, Final Approach®, Gold Tip, Hoppes®, Millett®, Night Optics, Primos®, Simmons®, Stoney Point®, Tasco®, Uncle Mike's®, Uncle Mike's Law Enforcement®, and the following eyewear brands: Bollé®, Cébé® and Serengeti®. For information about any of these brands or products, please contact Paul Arnhold, Bushnell Public Relations at (913) 752-6105 or parnhold@bushnell.com, or contact Mike Capps, Howard Communications, at (573) 898-3422 or mcapps@howardcommunications.com.



DSC HELPS USA SHOOTING WITH GRANT TO JUNIOR SHOTGUN TEAM

DALLAS (May 23, 2013) — Fifteen junior shotgun team athletes from USA Shooting will get the chance to compete at the 2013 World Clay Target Championships in Lima, Peru, this September as a result of a grant provided by the Dallas Safari Club (DSC).

The latest in a long line of vital support and contribution provided by DSC, the grant will aid USA Shooting in getting the world's strongest shotgun program to participate at full strength with an open and junior team capable of a heavy medal haul in men's and women's skeet and trap as well as men's double trap.

This year's DSC donation to the USA Shooting Team Foundation is the fourth straight year in which the conservation and hunting organization has stepped up to provide significant contributions to benefit USA Shooting athletes.

DSC is an international leader in conservation, education and hunter advocacy. Most members of the current USA Shooting Team are active hunters and anglers, blending a passion for the outdoors with winning on the world stage.

"Our ongoing support for America's Olympic hopefuls is a genuine source of pride for our members and our entire organization," said Ben Carter, DSC executive director. "We're proud to help these fine young ambassadors pursue their dreams and represent our country while flying the flag for outdoor and sporting lifestyles."

DSC sponsorships are reciprocated by shooting team members assisting with DSC conventions, youth education events, public exhibits and more.

About Dallas Safari Club (DSC): Desert bighorns on an unbroken landscape, stalking Cape buffalo in heavy brush, students discovering conservation. DSC works to guarantee a future for all these and much more. An independent nonprofit organization since 1982, DSC has become an international leader in conserving wildlife and wilderness lands, educating youth and the general public, and promoting and protecting the rights and interests of hunters worldwide. Get involved at www.biggame.org. For more information, contact Steve Wagner, Blue Heron Communications, (800) --654-3766 or steve@blueheroncomm.com.

2013 Lone Star Land Steward Award Winner Lauded for Conservation Efforts on Two Ranches

AUSTIN (May 2013) Revitalization efforts on two ranches in two different ecological regions of the state have earned a Houston couple the 2013 Leopold Conservation Award, Texas' highest honor for private land conservation.

Recognized for their stewardship were Jack and Jan Cato, who in 2004 and 2006 received regional Lone Star Land Steward awards for what they have done to restore their two properties – the Buckhollow Ranch in Uvalde and Real counties on the Edwards Plateau and the Stockard-Sirianni Ranch in Frio County. That ranch is located in the South Texas Plains ecoregion.

The Leopold award, given in honor of renowned conservationist Aldo Leopold, is conferred each year by Sand County Foundation, an international non-profit organization devoted to private land conservation, in partnership with the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) as part of its Lone Star Land Steward Awards program. In Texas, the Leopold award is sponsored by the Lynde and Harry Bradley Fund for the Environment, Silver Eagle Distributors and the Lee and Ramona Bass Foundation.

"Winning two regional Land Steward awards and now the Leopold Award is a phenomenal accomplishment, never achieved in Texas, and a true testament to their dedication to land stewardship," TPWD Executive Director Carter Smith said of the Catos. "The Catos have dedicated an extreme amount of time and personal sacrifice in an effort to reach their wildlife and habitat management goals."

"Aldo Leopold comprehended the necessity of the private landowner providing and improving habitat. The Catos have done that in spades, and probably, with spades," said Brent Haglund, PhD, Sand County Foundation president. "We know many 'tools' have been used by the Catos to make their land a much more wildlife-rich part of Texas, and we are glad to be part of this partnership recognition."

The Catos accepted the Leopold crystal award and a check for \$10,000 at the annual Lone Star Land Steward Awards dinner in Austin on May 21.

The couple purchased their Frio County property 35 years ago; they have owned the Buckhollow Ranch since 1997.

"On Buckhollow Ranch, the management goals are to manage and improve the ranch for wildlife diversity, and to provide optimum wildlife habitat," retired TPWD biologist Richard B. Taylor pointed out in his nomination of the Catos for the Leopold Award. "The emphasis is on improving the native habitat through proper range and wildlife management, and to maintain healthy, native wildlife populations – with an emphasis on nongame, threatened, and endangered species."

Goals for the Stockard-Sirianni Ranch, he continued, "are to maintain as healthy an ecosystem as possible, while allowing and maintaining maximum biodiversity through innovative habitat management."

Taylor's nomination listed these accomplishments:

- Due to excellent habitat management, endangered species such as the black-capped vireo, golden-cheeked warbler and Tobusch fishhook cactus are increasing on the Buckhollow Ranch. Natural springs are returning to life, and flow volumes have increased since the Catos purchased the ranch. Because of the ample ground cover that has become established through sound management practices, water penetration has improved, run-off slowed, and soil erosion noticeably diminished.
- Native plant populations have been surveyed on Buckhollow by the Texas Nature Conservancy and monitored by various agencies including TPWD



From left: TPWD Executive Director Carter Smith; Tina Y. Buford, Jack Cato (2013 Leopold Conservation Award winner, and TPW Commission Vice-Chair Ralph H. Duggins.

and the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). Texas Snowbell, an endemic native plant, was reintroduced several years ago in an attempt to re-establish it in its historical range.

- On the Stockard-Sirianni Ranch, bi-annual helicopter surveys are conducted to assess white-tailed deer, coyotes, feral hog, javelina, turkey and quail populations. Incidental herpetological surveys have also been conducted by the landowners, TPWD, and ranch visitors. Plant surveys targeting native grasses have been conducted by South Texas Natives and

TPWD. Similar to those found on the Buckhollow, bird populations are also monitored throughout the year by various bird watching groups and individuals, including the Catos, who are active birders.

- The Catos have participated in a prescribed burn school and numerous wildlife seminars to better educate themselves on habitat management and environmental issues. Most of their knowledge has been directly applied to the landscape.
- Water guzzlers (a mechanical water conservation device) installed throughout Buckhollow Ranch continue to benefit wildlife by improving species distribution and decreasing dependence on natural springs, rivers, and streams.
- In addition, extensive stands of ashe juniper have been removed to increase spring flow, and four solar-powered water wells have either been retrofitted or drilled. Water diversion berms have been created across all hillside roads to prevent soil erosion, and one small holding tank has been created to capture seasonal water for wildlife. This has helped reduce negative impacts to sensitive areas.
- As a result of extensive habitat management on Buckhollow Ranch, native grasses such as little bluestem are returning at an increasing rate, slowly replacing the non-native King Ranch bluestem that previous owners planted and allowed to increase. Browsing pressure on woody plants such as live oak has decreased dramatically, allowing ample regeneration.
- At the Stockard-Sirianni Ranch, existing fences have been replaced, and a rotational grazing system instituted. This has benefitted the native habitat, and improved livestock production. In addition, a roughly 20-acre wetland has been established for resident and migratory waterfowl, complete with levees and pipelines to maintain water levels. More than 100 bird nesting boxes have been erected on this property, including bluebird boxes, screech owl boxes, wood duck boxes, purple martin houses, and bat boxes.
- In addition to the work they have done on their land, the Catos have been generous in sharing their properties with others—including local residents, neighbors, conservation groups, universities, and state and federal agencies. They have been actively involved with TPWD, NRCS, the Nature Conservancy, West Texas A&M University, and Southwest Texas Junior College by allowing these agencies or institutions to use the ranch for meetings, field days, research projects, demonstrations, and educational programs.

"Perhaps the most dramatic demonstration of the Catos's long-term commitment to conservation is the recent placing of the Buckhollow Ranch under a perpetual conservation easement with The Nature Conservancy," Smith noted. "The sole purpose of this is to preserve the natural beauty and habitat of the ranch for future generations."

ABERNATHY AND WOOTEN, 2013 RECIPIENTS OF TOWA SCHOLARSHIP, RECEIVE THEIR MASTERS' DEGREES

MATTHEW ABERNATHY AND RON WOOTEN, the 2013 recipients of the Dan Klepper Memorial Scholarship, both graduated with Master of Marine Science degrees from Texas A&M-Galveston on May 11, 2013.

Abernathy and Wooten were presented their scholarships at the annual conference in Galveston at the Hilton Hotel during the awards banquet. Both are repeat winners of the \$1500 scholarship.

In addition to taking classes, Wooten is a contributing writer for the Galveston Monthly. "I have an opportunity to provide the readers with interpretive guidance for their surrounding island and the Gulf of Mexico," said Wooten. "In my advanced studies of the bountiful resources the Gulf of Mexico has to offer, I am further convinced of just how much of a gift the Gulf of Mexico really is as well as the sometimes horrific impacts man has brought to this fragile, yet durable multiplicity of ecosystems."

In addition to his writing, Wooten pursues nature and wildlife photography. He recently had two showings of his photographs in the Galveston Art Walks. His photographs have been printed in various publications including *National Geographic* magazine. "By continually trying to capture the beauty of the outdoor world and by doing my best to provide informative and entertaining articles about natural topics, I can continue to make a difference in public perceptions regarding our natural resources," he said. "By writing in common language, the information can be understood and reach even the least educated and youngest citizens of this state."

Following graduation, Wooten plans to continue his writing and photographic careers.

Abernathy also combined class work with full time employment. His is the Conservations Programs Outreach Specialist for the Galveston Bay Foundation. "I plan to continue my work with the foundation, overseeing the oyster restoration projects and expanding the oyster shell recycling program," said Abernathy. "I will also continue to assist with other conservation projects with the Foundation and conduct community outreach programs and volunteer events to educate people about Galveston Bay." His work with the Foundation includes producing educational brochures and presentations. Houston's ABC affiliate Channel 13 TV recently featured the oyster recycling program in a special news segment. Abernathy narrated the television special, giving the history and purpose of the project and information on how the oyster shells are collected and recycled.

Abernathy has authored numerous articles in various publications including *Texas Parks & Wildlife* magazine. His feature story was on the Ridley's turtles.

Both Abernathy and Wooten have volunteered to work on the New Member Recruitment Committee for TOWA.

TOWA Committee Addresses Membership Recruitment

Membership is the lifeblood of TOWA, so addressing membership recruitment is crucial to our future. In the past, TOWA members (active and supporting) numbered in the five hundreds. At present, membership has dwindled to 118 active and associate members, seven life members and 87 supporting members.

At the 2013 TOWA conference, the board of directors held an open session with the general membership to discuss recruiting, marketing and TOWA's path forward. The many resulting ideas address: 1.) Organizational development and change (e.g., new membership levels, preserving institutional knowledge and lessons learned); 2.) Specific events (e.g., conservation Saturdays); 3.) Financial incentives (e.g., discounted rates for conferences); 4.) Marketing approaches (e.g., pitches, social media; and 5.) Specific targets (e.g., organizations, individuals) and more.

Matthew Abernathy, Shane Townsend and Ron Wooten were asked to develop a recruitment plan proposal for TOWA that reflects the goals and input of the membership and board. They submitted a very comprehensive plan to the board on April 1, 2013. The plan includes ideas to bolster membership from within traditional profiles, and to also capture members from other professional profiles, with a goal of a 10 percent increase in membership from traditional profiles in the first year of implementation, and a goal of ten new members from each selected non-traditional professional profiles — communicators who are our partners in conservation and education, but who may not fit the traditional hook-and-bullet profile.

Naturally, the recruitment strategies center on bolstering both offerings and benefits to current and prospective members. TOWA must be vital, relevant and meaningful in order for us to continue to retain existing members and attract new ones.

The plan also outlines three key action projects to address recruitment:

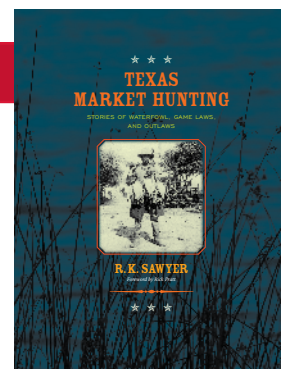
1. Update TOWA Message and Outreach
2. An Annual Membership Recruitment Contest
3. Establishment of a TOWA "Becoming an Outdoor Communicator" Program

The board reviewed the plan, and discussed the plan's key elements at the April TOWA Board Meeting in Rockport. A follow-up meeting was held on May 23, which was attended by Shane Townsend, TJ Greaney, Cody Greaney and Kendal Hemphill. At that meeting, they identified immediate action steps to be taken, which will be presented to the board for consideration in the coming days.

Your input and suggestions are welcomed: The current TOWA Board is intent on reversing TOWA's "top-down" management trend by involving active members in charting a course for our future. Let's face it, the more energy you put into TOWA, the more you will get out of your membership.

You can start by recruiting new members from your circle of friends and colleagues. Think of recruiting through six degrees of separation: We're all just a few connections away from anyone we want to meet, especially in our industry. Connections and relationships — and our ability to leverage those — will help determine our recruiting success.

Interested members can obtain a copy of the above-mentioned report by emailing one of the members above, or any TOWA board member. Additional committee volunteers are welcomed.



THE RIGHT SIDE OF WRONG: THIRD BOOK IN REAVIS WORTHAM'S RED RIVER SERIES COMES OUT NEXT MONTH TO CRITICAL ACCLAIM

Pre-order it now from Amazon.com, Barnes & Noble, IndieBound

Burrows ended as 1965 drew to a close with Constable Cody Parker's frightening precognition of gathering storm clouds for the tight-knit Parker family from Center Springs, Texas. The dreams proved accurate. Cody is ambushed and nearly killed on a lonely country road during an unusually heavy snowfall. With that attack, the locals begin to worry that The Skinner, from The Rock Hole, has returned.

Constable Ned Parker struggles to connect a seemingly unrelated series of murders as his nephew recovers. As the summer of 1966 approaches, rock and roll evolves to reflect the increasing unrest in this country, and the people of northeast Texas wonder why their once peaceful community has suddenly become a dangerous place to live.

Ned's pre-teen grandchildren, Top and Pepper, are underfoot at every turn. The two lawmen, along with the deputy John Washington, cross paths with many colorful characters originally introduced in Wortham's acclaimed Red River series: cranky old Judge O.C. Rains, the jittery little farmer Isaac Reader, and the Wilson boys Ty Cobb and Jimmy Foxx.

And then there's the arrival of the mysterious tough old man named Tom Bell. When Cody follows his main suspect across the Rio Grande and into Mexico, Ned understands that to save his nephew, he will have to cross more than a river, he will have to cross over to the *Right Side of Wrong*.

Humor, suspense, horror, precognition, and life in the tumultuous 60s are examined with an unflinching eye by the author of the Red River series.

"Reavis Z. Wortham has masterfully reinvented the true meaning of 'heart pounding' by bringing fears to life right where we live. You'll burn through the pages of The Right Side Of Wrong from the first bone-chilling page."

—Sandra Brannan, author of the *Liv Bergen Mystery Series*, a two-time recipient of ABA Indie NextList

"Set in the 1960s, The Right Side of Wrong pits a group of Texas lawmen against a Mexican cartel in a gritty, dark and suspenseful Western with a final explosive showdown that kept me turning the pages late into the night to see who would survive. Wortham's rich prose places him among the finest writers of American Western fiction today."

—Jamie Freveletti, Internationally bestselling author of *Dead Asleep*

Sawyer's Texas Market Hunting Debuts in August

In 1867, the *Galveston Daily News* gushed: "Texas is still the promised land. Our market is supplied with great numbers of wild geese at 50 cents, wild ducks at 50 cents a brace. All these things are the substantial on which we live." Less than a decade later, the men who supplied those local markets — market hunters — saw their fledgling occupation grow into a state, national, and even global enterprise.

Market hunting provided income to hundreds of Texas market men, and even more who worked as packers and shippers. At the business's peak in the late 1890s to early 1900s, Rockport game merchants shipped an average of 600 ducks a day for five-months, and an estimated 60,000 ducks and geese were shipped north each year from Corpus Christi alone. While the catalyst was demand for wild game on restaurant tables and plumage for millinery salons, it was post-Civil War technology advancements in shotguns, ice-making machinery, and a network of railroads that delivered it.

This is the story that Rob Sawyer tells in his book *Texas Market Hunting: Stories of Waterfowl, Game Laws, and Outlaws*, which chronicles not just Texas' market hunting history, but also the state's first conservationists and game laws, and the showdown that followed between early game wardens and outlaw market hunters. Published by A&M University Press, *Texas Market Hunting* is due out in late August. This is Rob's second book, following last year's *A Hundred Years of Texas Waterfowl Hunting: The Decoys, Guides, Clubs, and Places, 1870s to 1970s*.

SHANNON TOMPKINS RECOGNIZED BY SIERRA CLUB/HOUSTON GROUP WITH 2012 ENVIRONMENTAL REPORTING AWARD

SHANNON TOMPKINS, LONG-TIME TOWA MEMBER, PAST PRESIDENT AND L.A. WILKE AWARD-WINNER, recently received the Sierra Club/Houston Group's 2012 Environmental Reporting Award.

In presenting the award at the Houston Sierra Club's May meeting, Brandt Mannchen of the awards committee highlighted Tompkins' wide-ranging coverage in the *Houston Chronicle* of issues impacting the environment and outdoor recreation.

In particular, Mannchen noted a column on the value and importance of introducing young people to the outdoors through fishing; a thought-provoking column on the psychology of littering; news stories on Texas Parks and Wildlife Department funding issues; and a piece on how a coalition of environmental groups and fishing/conservation organizations won crucial battles in the effort to protect Galveston Bay.

Tompkins, a newspaper reporter for more than 30 years and *Houston Chronicle* reporter/columnist since 1990, has been a TOWA member since 1981.