

Natural Resource ENTERPRISES

www.naturalresources.msstate.edu

Issue 3, No. 2

Wildlife Species of Critical Concern

Summer is often a time of relaxation, reflection, and planning. For wildlife management professionals, it is the time when we have a chance to interpret the past and collect our thoughts about the upcoming seasons. Landowners may spend the summer months setting up lease arrangements, organizing visitors for an array of wildlife related outings, and planning for off season income streams to help support the family farm.

It is easy to assess the economic value of our "important" wildlife and fish species. Just ask any wildlife department in the southeast and they will explain very quickly that white-tailed deer and largemouth bass pay the bills for them, mostly in license revenue. It becomes very easy in our world of advertisements and marketing to focus on the potential earnings and benefits of our habitat management objectives. Sometimes as we do this, however, we overlook some very important and often lesser known wildlife species.

Several springs ago, as I surveyed a flooded moist-soil impoundment in the Mississippi Delta, I caught a glimpse of a "lesser known" marvel of nature. It was an interior least tern that was feeding around a waterfowl management unit in Tallahatchie County. After identifying the bird, I quickly remembered it is on our threatened and endangered species list. This encounter was memorable for me, but it was further elevated in my mind because of the dual purpose these impoundments served on that day. I imagine many of us often miss these opportunities to capitalize on seeing species of concern, but the real question is why.

We probably miss opportunities because we either fail to look for them or we forget that some of the management processes we employ can be adjusted slightly to accommodate other beneficial species, and some of those could be species of concern. To date, Mississippi has 39 species of reptiles, amphibians, birds, and mammals collectively listed on our endangered species list. Sightings of these wildlife species are rare, but still possible for landowners in the right areas of



Glenn and Martha Vargas © California Academy of Sciences

the state. I can say from both a hunter's and wildlife watcher's perspective I enjoy viewing rare things in nature.

For those of you interested in establishing or enhancing a current wildlife enterprise, managing habitat for these critical and rare species is important environmentally and economically. Employing management objectives that enhance habitat requirements for these species of concern may even come with financial assistance from state and federal agencies. For example, the US Fish and Wildlife Service rewards landowners who manage their lands in ways conducive to threatened and endangered species to be free from land-use restrictions in the future if threatened species appear on other portions of their property (i.e., the Safe Harbor Program of the Endangered Species Act). As a steward of your resources, you may provide someone with the encounter of a lifetime, but you will also provide better habitat for most game animals and promote conservation and recreation all at the same time. Remember to look at all of the features of your landscape and determine if your habitat management plan takes threatened species into consideration.

For a complete list of critical species in your state contact your state wildlife resources agency or the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Visit us at www.naturalresources.msstate.edu for more details about the NRE program.

-Adam Tullos, atullos@ext.msstate.edu

Mississippi Native Plants *Wild plum*



Photo by Paul Wray, Iowa State University, Bugwood.org

Many of us who are old enough to receive advertisements from AARP remember the tart sweet taste of plum jelly on a hot biscuit at our grandparents' kitchen table in late summer of the southland. Plum thickets grew densely along gravel roads and many creatures, including kids visiting grandparents in the country were attracted to these thickets for the sweet if not lively plums. Over 40 species of animals eat the fruit of native plum trees.

Native plums are small trees or shrubs with smooth, shiny bark that has horizontal markings. The leaves are arranged alternately along the stem and brownish glands may be seen on their bases and occasionally along the serrate leaf margins. The flowers appear in late winter or early spring and are white to pinkish, rose-type form. Many plums will flower before the leaves bud so they may be among the first flowers of spring. Two plums are common to Mississippi's woodlands and meadows.

Chickasaw plums (*Prunus angustifolia*) are small upright shrubs that form dense thickets. The leaves are 2-3 inches long, elliptic to lanceolate, and often folded and turning upward. Twigs are reddish and shiny. Chickasaw plums typically flower from March to April and produce fruit from May through July. The ripe plums are red to yellow, about an inch long and sweet. This plant occurs along right-of-ways, forest margins and in old fields. It colonizes by sprouting from roots and is often spread by the many animals that eat the fruits.

American plum (*Prunus americana*) is a larger, multi-stemmed shrub that grows to 30 feet in height. The leaves are ovate to elliptical with a sharply pointed tip. The 3-4 inch long leaves are green above and slightly paler beneath. American plums are about 1 inch across,

reddish purple to yellow-brown and ripen in mid to late summer. These shrubs occur in rocky or sandy soils in woodlands, pastures, abandoned farms, along streams and hedgerows.

Plums are important fruit producers from early spring into the summer months. The fruits are eaten by many wildlife species including white-tailed deer, black bear, gray fox, coyote, raccoon, and Virginia opossum. The fruits are low in protein, but moderate in phosphorous and calcium content. Plum thickets provide excellent escape and nesting cover for Northern Bobwhite Quail and songbirds like the Northern Mockingbird, Brown Thrasher, and Gray Catbird. Rabbits and other small mammals will often seek cover in dense plum thickets. The leaves and stems are typically a low preference white-tailed deer browse; therefore, if one is seeking a fruit producing plant where deer are abundant, plums are an ideal selection. However, deer do eat the fruit!

Most plum species are easily grown in average, dry to medium wet, well-drained soils in full sun to part shade. They should be protected from herbicide applications and should not be burned or mowed frequently if fruit production and thicket cover is a goal.

Although most species grow in low fertility soils, a small amount of fertilizer such as 6-8-8, sprinkled in the soil around the plants may enhance growth and fruit production in following growing seasons. Native plums can enhance habitat for many species of wildlife as well as outdoorsy kids seeking a natural playhouse that provides fruit for jelly making!

- Dr. Jeanne Jones, Mississippi State University
- Andi Cooper, Ducks Unlimited, Jackson, MS

Landowner spotlight

Tim Carpenter Eagle Lake Lodge & Outfitters

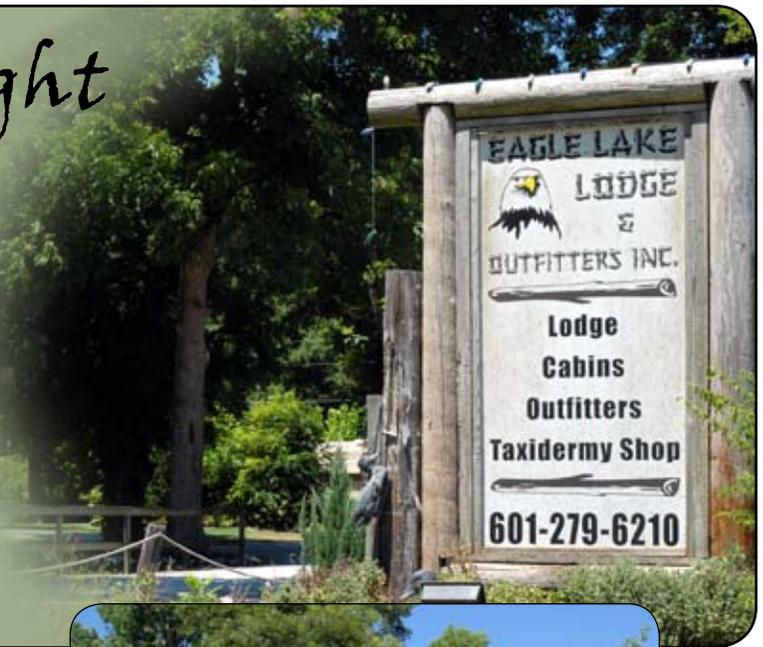
Eagle Lake Lodge and Outfitters, located on Eagle Lake, just north of Vicksburg, Mississippi, provides a variety of hunting, fishing, and outdoor experiences on Eagle Lake, surrounding oxbow lakes, and wildlife management areas in the Delta. The cabins and lodging are located on three landscaped acres of pecan, hackberry, and leyland cypress trees with flower gardens and a fishing pier. A taxidermy shop and a gift shop are also on the property.

In 1999, Tim Carpenter began to fulfill his childhood dream of being a hunting guide and taxidermist when he and his family purchased their property on Eagle Lake just north of Vicksburg, MS.

From 1999-2004 he started his business part-time with limited guiding and began to develop infrastructure (a lodge and cabins). After retiring from a 29-year career with Reader's Digest in 2004, he was ready to fulfill his dream full-time.

The owner and operator of Eagle Lake Lodge and Outfitters authored a simple business plan entitled "Project 365." The name referred to his guiding and outfitting business and the 365 days in a year that his business needed to generate income in order to survive. "To be a full-time operation, I knew I had to have year-round cash flow to avoid falling into the seasonal trap that most guides and outfitters fall into," Carpenter said.

To accomplish his goal of operating 365 days of the year, he diversified the activities his business offers, yet he always kept them in-line with his dream. Carpenter's calendar includes full-service guiding and outfitting from late summer to late winter, taxidermy following the duck season until mid-summer, and guiding fishing trips, hosting "Juggin' for Catfish" tournaments, eco-tours, and marketing his business at state and regional hunting expos filling the schedule in the late summer. Meanwhile, the primary source of year-round income is the lodge and cabin accommodations. Even with this full schedule, he always makes time to network or



as he says "sit down and have a cup of coffee with members of the community and other local business owners." This networking is not only crucial for the success of his business, but for other businesses as well. His clients spend a lot of money in the local communities for fuel, entertainment, food, and other supplies.

In his eighth year of operation, Mr. Carpenter is proud to report that business has grown every year, with 2007 being the best year so far. He also reports that he lives comfortably and is able to "squeeze" in a couple of vacations and yes, some hunting trips for himself. He accomplishes this through excellent management, partnerships, a willingness to continually learn (he has been both an NRE workshop attendee and speaker), and most of all maintaining a positive attitude.

Our next newsletter will discuss how to develop business partnerships. We will highlight Mr. Carpenter's partnerships in the local community that are part of the foundation for the success of his business. If you would like to learn more about Eagle Lake Lodge and Outfitters visit them on the Web at <http://www.eaglelakeldgout.com>.

natural resource enterprises



Natural Resource Enterprises
Box 9690
Mississippi State, MS 39762

Upcoming events

September 30th - Natural Resource Enterprises workshop in Lincoln County (Brookhaven), MS

October 9th - tentative date - Natural Resource Enterprises workshop in Noxubee County (Macon), MS

October 23rd - Natural Resource Enterprises workshop at Ames Plantation, TN

October 28-29th - Natural Resource Enterprises workshop in Columbia, South Carolina

For a list of upcoming events and links to registration forms and more information, visit <http://www.wildlifeworkshop.msstate.edu>

