

Wildlife Journal

Cooperative Efforts Help Non-Game Species



In late January of 2008 Deltic Timber Corporation was contacted by Blake Sasse of the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission (AGFC). Blake is the Nongame Mammal/Furbearer Program Leader for Arkansas. He was specifically interested in cooperating with Deltic on a project to protect and enhance critical bat habitat on company timberlands. During that initial conversation, he communicated to Deltic exactly what it was he hoped to accomplish. He informed us:

“For quite some time, several biologists have been conducting research on the Rafinesque’s big-eared bat in southern Arkansas. The species is a bottomland hardwood specialist that prefers to roost in extremely large trees with hollows up to 3’ wide in them. Since trees of that size are kind of rare across the landscape today, the bats have taken to roosting in abandoned houses in the summer and old hand-dug water wells in the winter. From our record archive, there apparently are at least three abandoned wells on Deltic property that these bats have utilized in the past. One well is in Columbia County and two other wells are in Nevada County. The AGFC is interested in doing some management with these sorts of wells to maintain them as available habitat for the bats to roost in and also protect them from possible human

entry. Basically, the AGFC would like to place a well-fabricated steel cover over the top of the wells with a gap large enough for the bats to fly in and out through. Another good thing is that we won’t just be providing benefits to a single species of bats. Other bats are likely to use these sites along with the Rafinesque’s, such as Southeastern Bats and Evening Bats.”

Based on this information and opportunity made available, Deltic Timber was quick to offer our permission and cooperation to proceed with building and installing the covers. Blake then communicated with Bat Conservation International (BCI) and was able to procure some funding for the fabrication of two well covers via a federal grant BCI had received. Shortly thereafter, the covers were constructed.

Biology of Rafinesque’s Big-Eared Bat*

Rafinesque’s big-eared bats are known to form nursery colonies in large hollow trees. Hollow tree roosts provide stable internal environments, protection from predators, and often contain well-insulated areas that form the hot-air traps essential for rearing their young. These bats range throughout the southeastern United States from southern Virginia south and west to eastern Texas and northward along the Mississippi



“The Rafinesque’s Big-Eared Bat is certainly an odd-looking mammal. Though many Southern sportsmen aren’t even aware of its existence, cooperative actions on Deltic property help to ensure critical habitat is enhanced and taken care of.”



River valley to southern Indiana. Their range most closely approximates the historical range of great cypress swamps, indicating that they may have formed a traditional reliance on these areas as roosting and/or foraging sites.

Many of these swamps have been drained which resulted in the large trees being harvested. The Rafinesque's bats then tended to move their maternity roosts into old buildings or attics. Rafinesque's big-eared bats are slow, agile flyers and appear to forage on a wide variety of small nocturnal insects with a strong preference for moths. They hibernate near their summer foraging grounds in old mines, caves, and cisterns.

Though widespread in the eastern U.S., this bat is nowhere abundant and population levels appear to have declined in the past century due to loss of summer roosting or foraging habitat and/or disturbance at winter hibernation locations. Rafinesque's big-eared bats, like almost all other bat species, are at special risk around locations where they form nursery or hibernation colonies.

The most obvious physical characteristic of Rafinesque's big-eared bat is their disproportionately large ears, which is common only to one other species of bat found in the United States. While at



"This image details areas in the United States where Rafinesque's Big-Eared Bats are commonly found."

rest, a Rafinesque's big-eared bat has the ability to curl its ears down towards its cranium. Females normally give birth to a single offspring in May or June of each year and by the time late fall arrives, the juveniles are about the same size as adults.

Installation of Well Covers & Inspections
On September 18th, 2008 Blake and David Saughey

with the US Fish & Wildlife Service arrived at the Deltic tract with the well covers. It took about 10-15 minutes of trying to locate the wells in the very dense underbrush before they were finally discovered. The underbrush was then cleared by hand in order to make a path so the covers could be carried in.

Each cover was then set into place on top of a well and adjusted to the proper height in order to facilitate bat utilization. Once in place, it was simply a process of placing a washer against the well cover leg and screwing it permanently into place with long concrete screws. After completion, the lid of the cover was closed and an AGFC lock was placed on it.

Prior to the September visit to install the covers, these abandoned well sites had not been inspected very frequently. The wells in Nevada County were last visited in 2006 and the Columbia County site was last visited in 2003. In mid-December 2008, Blake again inspected the sites to see if utilization had improved from the limited previous inspections. After this round of inspections, his email correspondence was as follows:

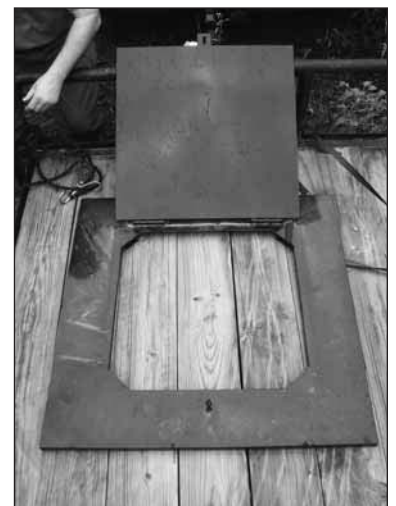
"We had a spot of cold weather last week and I took advantage of that on Friday to go check the three wells we put covers on this fall. We can definitely say that the bats were not offended by the covers, as there were Rafinesque's bats in all of them and at higher numbers than seen in the previous two winter visits."

His estimates of bat occupancy for the three wells were that the Columbia County

"Thanks to Bat Conservation International and the AGFC, well covers were provided for the three Deltic well locations."



"After clearing out significant amounts of underbrush and small saplings, the old wells were ready to have covers placed on them."



One Very Old Bear



Last May, Deltic Timber Corporation was notified by the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission (AGFC) regarding a radio-collared bear that apparently had died on company timberlands in southeastern Columbia County. Earlier that spring

during one of their routine aircraft surveillance flights to check the status of the various radio-collared bears stocked into the Felsenthal National Wildlife Refuge (FNWR), a mortality signal was received by the pilot from the collar this particular bear was wearing. What's unique about this is the fact this bear was not an individual that had recently been stocked into the FNWR. This was an adult male which had probably dispersed out of the population in the Ouachita National Forest a long time ago.



"This bear was caught at least 2 different times in hog traps. Holes in the top of most trap designs can allow bears & turkeys to exit if they're accidentally caught."

Although we'll never know just how long he was a resident in southern Arkansas, the first time he made his presence widely known was in August of 2000. At that time, a local man captured him in a hog trap in Columbia County, Arkansas. Game and Fish Commission employees subsequently tranquilized him and collected standard

biological measurements. In addition, an ear tag was placed in him and a tooth was pulled to obtain as accurate an age as possible. Physically, this bear was not particularly impressive based on any single measurement obtained and was estimated to weigh 350 lbs. However, the age of this bear was somewhat surprising. At the time of this capture, his age was confirmed by laboratory analysis to be between 13-15 years old.

Press forward to early November 2005. AGFC employee Brady Baker finds himself again staring at the same bear. And once again, he's in a hog trap.

Only this time it's just across the county line into southwestern Union County. Fortunately, during this encounter Brady had in his possession an adequately sized radio collar that he was able to securely place around the bear's neck. After gathering biological data for a second time from this individual, he was once again released back into the lower Arkansas woodlands.



"Just a few bones were all that could be located in the dense underbrush. The radio collar is in the middle of the photo."

Since he was now wearing a radio-collar, his status and movements were able to be monitored by air from that time forward. It was during one of these routine flights that the pilot received an "inactive signal" from this bear in southeastern Columbia County. This signal usually means only one of two things has happened...either the collar has fallen off or the bear is dead. In either situation, a motionless collar pulses at a different rate-which signals to the investigator

something is wrong. Therefore the location around the collar needs to be physically examined for clues about the condition of the bear. Additionally, the retrieval of such a valuable collar needs to occur while the batteries are still working and it can be located.



"Note how short and blunt the large canine tooth is. The canine on the opposite side had been lost and several other teeth were gone."

Back to the original AGFC contacting of Deltic Timber in May. They were requesting permission from us to access our property in order to ascertain the bear's status and hopefully retrieve their collar. Of course, we were happy to grant this permission, assist them with getting through company gates, and also help with the "on the ground" search for this bear and/or its remains.

After about 45 minutes of listening to the radio receiver and busting through the south Arkansas brush, the collar was finally located. Unfortunately for the bear, as we approached the collar we could see the tell-tell sign of a few white bones lying nearby. It took another 15 minutes or so to find most of the major bones of the skeleton (femurs, scapulas, a few ribs, skull, etc) scattered along a small and very dense creek bottom.

This situation is often the norm with radio collar mortality. Once an animal dies, the scavengers and insects nearby are



"Former AGFC bear biologist Rick Eastridge holds the skull of the bear that lived for so long in the southern lowlands of Arkansas."

quick to move in and begin feeding on the remains. As they do so, the scavengers keep the collar moving as they pull and tug at the carcass. As long as this is happening, the collar will pulsate in the same manner as if

the animal were alive and moving. Henceforth, by the time it totally stops moving for a designated time period (usually 8 hours) and the pulse frequency changes to indicate a problem, all potential evidence of what happened to cause the mortality may have been consumed.

In this case, there was no visible bullet hole or fracture that could be attributed to a poacher's bullet. Most likely, this bear simply died as a result of old age. After all, in May of 2008 when the remains were examined, this male bear had lived to somewhere between 21 and 23 years old!

Although we'll never know the exact cause of his death, the one thing we do know is he found habitat he liked and that could sustain him for several years of his life on Deltic property in the southern Arkansas woodlands. Most certainly, if another bear hasn't already moved in and taken up residency in the area, it won't be long until that happens. Hopefully, another generation of sportsmen can be privileged enough to see some of this old guy's offspring throughout the piney woods of the ArkLaTex. ▼

The Bragging



"Jerry Snowden killed this 20 pounder the second day of turkey season last year on his lease near Clinton, AR. The bird finally came in after gobbling 53 times. He had a 9 1/2 beard and 7/8" spurs."



"Jerry harvested this 500+ pound bear the second day of archery season. The bear was taken with a Matthews bow at 18 yards. Both Harry & Jerry are members of N & V Hunting Club in Van Buren County and they harvested their bears on Deltic Timber property."



"Seven year old Nikolas Sparks made his dad very proud on October 25th, 2008 when he killed his first deer. She was a 112lb doe taken with .50 caliber muzzleloader at 40 yards. Nikolas is doing his part for the club's QDMA."



"Father & son make it 2 years in a row. Harry got this bear opening day of archery season with his crossbow at 26 yards."

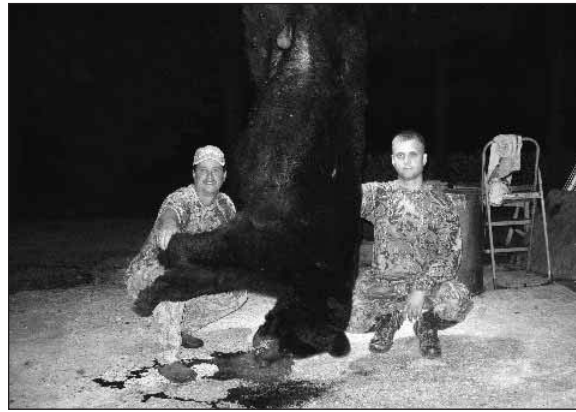
Nine year old Caroline Humphreys of El Dorado excitedly shows off the first deer or her life. She used a Remington model 7 in 7mm-08 from 52 yards to put down this Union County doe on December 13, 2008."



Board

DELTA

"Jimmy Hobbs, who is 5'11" tall, killed this 484lb bear from his lease in Perry county on the opening day (September 15th) of archery season last year with his crossbow. After the 13 yard shot with a 100 grain Thunderhead, the bear only went 40 yards."



"Kirk Jackson killed this bear on September 22nd from the same stand Jimmy Hobbs used to shoot his bear. Kirk's bear was 475lbs and was also killed with Jimmy's crossbow at 10 yards. The tracking job only went 35 yards."



"Landon Smith and his dad Keith of El Dorado both harvested nice bucks from the same stand. The Smith Hunting Club has always let younger bucks grow and these were just 2 of the 12 legal bucks they saw from the "pistol stand". Landon used a New England Arms .243 on 16 Nov. 2008 to down his 10 point and Keith shot his buck on 22 Nov. 2008 with a Remington 700 30-06."

"November 1st, 2008 was a good morning for Lauren Reynolds (8) and Clay Prince (8) of The Ridge Hunting Club in Perry County. Lauren connected on this nice 7-point buck at 60 yards with her .223. Clay used his .243 from 30 yards on the doe and five minutes later placed a 35 yard neck shot into the 4-point, which was his first buck."



"Jared Self (11) hunted all day on their QDM lease before laying a bullet right into the front chest of this buck at 100 yards on November 23, 2007. He was using a lever-action Browning .243 with a 3x9 scope and had watched the buck chase several does around his stand before he was able to get the shot off."



Continued from page 2

site had 18 in it the day he visited. In 2003 there were only 2 individuals found. During the previous visit, there were only 9 present.

One well in Nevada County contained 8 Rafinesque's in December 2008. Previous inspections revealed 2 Rafinesque's and 1 Southeastern bat were present in 2003 and 0 Rafinesque's and 10 Southeastern bats in 2006. The second Nevada County well housed 5 Rafinesque's. During both the 2003 and 2006 inspections there were no bats observed utilizing this well.

Hopefully, the alterations and improvements to these wells will continue to result in the sites being utilized perpetually by significant numbers of bats. From originally looking at these abandoned wells, most people would instantaneously think that, "they're good for nothing and need to be filled in and demolished". From a limited viewpoint of human safety, that is probably a true statement. However, with well-constructed and well-installed metal covers on them, the human safety risk is removed and at the same time they provide very high quality habitat for multiple species. If you're reading this and realize there is an exposed well such as the ones pictured above on your Deltic lease, please

notify us immediately so we can rectify the situation. Deltic personnel continue to inspect our woodlands and we are actively pursuing additional covers for

other wells we have recently located.

Although most readers of this publication are primarily interested in game species (deer, turkeys, ducks, squirrels, rabbits, etc), it's often worthwhile to spend some time examining the life habits and biology of non-game species. After all, they certainly outnumber the game animals sportsman pursue and consequently virtually every outdoor excursion results in far more encounters with non-game species than game species. Think about it...even though he may not be able to recognize all of them, every turkey hunter probably hears the singing of 20 different songbirds on a spring turkey hunt and may never even see or hear a turkey. The fisherman may hear the same on a morning's trip. Sometimes we need to slow down and focus on the obvious things that we never have before.

The woodlands of the southern United States are very diverse and the home to hundreds of very different creatures that we can continue learning about and provide benefit to. Cooperation between Deltic, the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission, and Bat Conservation International is just one good example of how different parties can come together, achieve a common goal, and provide tangible benefits to many different species within our southern ecosystem.



"Blake Sassse permanently installs a well cover over the top of an abandoned well on Deltic Timber Corporation property."



"At the end of the day, critical habitat was significantly improved for the local bat population."

* Section on Rafinesque's big-eared bat biology taken from the BCI web site as well as from "Arkansas Mammals," Selander & Heidt 1990

REMINDERS

Hunting License Renewal Information

For the 2009 Deltic hunting license agreement renewal period, Deltic will be implementing the following change in regards to the timing of the mail out and our invoicing process:

- Hunting licenses will be mailed out the 2nd week in May (2 weeks earlier than in the past)
- The due date will remain the same as it always has been (June 30th).
- A 10% late fee will be implemented for license renewals post-marked later than June 30th.

These changes result in clubs having 50% more time than in previous years (at least a full 6 weeks) to collect dues and get their payments made for their licensed area. Clubs will notice two "Amounts Due" on their invoice...one for payments post-marked on or prior to June 30th and one for payments post-marked after the June 30th deadline.

For the 2009-10 hunting license renewal period and assuming our insurance rates remain at the 2008 levels, Deltic's rates will be adjusted in the following manner:

- Waldo Region-Customers will experience a 4.4% increase to \$4.75/acre
- Ola Region-Customers will experience a 6.3% increase to \$4.25/acre
- Clubs with camp site fees will experience an increase of \$75.00 to \$450.00 annually.

Ola and Waldo Regions



Camp Site Information

As mentioned in the Fall 2008 issue, by the time the hunting license renewal invoices reach your club's mailbox all known camp site locations will have had a blue boundary line painted around them. Please ensure that all your camping items remain inside this perimeter. If you wish to expand your camping area outside the painted boundary line, you must contact either Greg Humphreys (870-881-6422) or the Deltic district forester (**visit www.deltic.com for contact information**) responsible for your lease in order to obtain permission.



Award Recipient

Deltic Timber Corporation was recently awarded the "2008 Corporate Conservationist of the Year Award" by the Arkansas Wildlife Federation for our outstanding contributions in the wise use and management of the nation's natural resources.

The Arkansas Wildlife Federation was founded by a group of sportsmen in 1936 to represent citizens who cared about the wildlife, waters, and wild lands of Arkansas. The Federation's goal is to become a leader in educating people about conservation issues and in encouraging the wise stewardship of our natural resources. We at Deltic sincerely appreciate the recognition and award and intend to exhibit continual improvement regarding all aspects of our forestry and wildlife operations.



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This magazine is published for all the sportsmen enjoying Deltic's land in Arkansas, Louisiana and east Texas. Please exercise good hunter safety and etiquette and respect the land for the sake of future generations.



Please send all comments, suggestions and photos to the address above.

