

## MEMORANDUM

**DATE:** 9/27/2021  
**TO:** Mayor Lankford & City Council  
**VIA:** Mercy Rushing, City Manager  
**FROM:** Owen Tiner – Marketing and Tourism Director  
**SUBJECT:** Trap Camera Project at the Mineola Nature Preserve

**Council Meeting Agenda Item for** September 30, 2021

### **Background Information:**

Mark Edmund of the East Texas Chapter of Master Naturalists spoke with the parks and open spaced board on September 15<sup>th</sup> about implementing the trap camera project. It is a wildlife game camera tracking program. Game cameras would be set up, and checked periodically for a six month period. More detailed information on the project is attached. The master naturalists will be working with Texas Parks and Wildlife in tracking more rare species in the area.

### **Recommendation:**

The recommendation of the Parks and Open Spaces board is to allow Mr. Edmund and the East Texas Chapter of Master Naturalists to set up these cameras on the Preserve in low traffic areas for their project. We think the Nature Preserve would be a prime location to set up cameras. This would be a no-cost to Mineola project and carried out by the Master Naturalists. The camera will be set up on October 1 and run for 6 months.

## Texas Nature Trackers Camera Trap Program

The Texas Nature Trackers program at Texas Parks and Wildlife engages naturalists of all ability levels and interests in citizen science and crowdsourced data collection focused on Texas native plants and animals. The program offers opportunities that both grow and enrich the naturalist community and generate data that contribute to research and inform conservation decisions. One of the particular goals of the program is to collect data on Texas' more than 1,300 Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN). These are generally native animals or plants that are declining or rare and in need of attention to recover or to prevent the need to list under state or federal regulation. Information on the Texas Nature Trackers program can be found at the link below.

TPWD is teaming up with Master Naturalist chapters across the state to help collect data on Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN) by loaning a chapter up to 10 game cameras for a 6-month period. Sightings from the game cameras are uploaded to i-Naturalist where they can be identified. Data from i-Naturalist is also transferred to the Texas Natural Diversity Database for future research and to inform conservation decisions.

Our East Texas chapter of Master Naturalists will be asking TPWD to loan us game cameras for a 6-month period to be used across our 10-county region. The camera trap program is mainly focused on mammals that are on the SGCN list (see attached list with iNaturalist sightings). We are assembling a collection of both public lands and private properties for participation in the program. Right now our primary focus for public lands are the Mineola Nature Preserve (Wood County) and Tyler State Park (Smith County). The private properties we've identified are scattered across Wood, Van Zandt, Smith, Cherokee, and Anderson counties.

Our chapter will have a variety of duties to properly execute the camera trap program. Some of the duties will be performed in the field and some can be done from the comfort of your home.

These duties may include the following:

- Scouting out suitable habitat for the target species
- Setting up the camera(s) in habitat suitable to the target species. Cameras will need to be placed so that they can capture images of the target species but such that nearby vegetation (tree/shrub branches) don't trigger 'false' images in windy/stormy weather
- Routine (weekly) maintenance on the cameras (battery changes, changing out SD cards to recover the images, adjusting camera and/or surroundings to improve image quality, etc...)

## **Texas Nature Trackers Camera Trap Program**

- Relocating camera(s) as determined by the number and quality of images recovered
- Uploading images to i-Naturalist
- Using i-Naturalist to identify images
- Keeping track of camera locations and mapping camera locations
- Reporting program progress to the chapter
- Monthly newsletter articles, etc...

[https://tpwd.texas.gov/huntwild/wild/wildlife\\_diversity/texas\\_nature\\_trackers/target\\_species/](https://tpwd.texas.gov/huntwild/wild/wildlife_diversity/texas_nature_trackers/target_species/)

East Texas Chapter of Master Naturalists  
Potential Target Species for Camera Trap Program

iNaturalist Sightings for SGCN for the 10-County Region of ETCMN

Species of Greatest Conservation Need		Swamp Rabbit	Muskrat	American Black Bear	Eastern Louisiana Black Bear	Long-tailed Weasel	Eastern Spotted Skunk	Mountain Lion
County Name	Area Sq Miles	Sylvilagus aquaticus	Ondatra zibethicus	Ursus americanus	Ursus americanus <del>luteolus</del> americanus	Neogale Mustela frenata	Spilogale putorius	Puma concolor
Anderson	1,078	2 (2019/21)	0	0	0	0	0	0
Cherokee	1,062	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Gregg	276	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Henderson	949	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Rains	259	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Rusk	939	1 (2020)	0	1 (2019)	0	0	0	0
Smith	949	1 (2017)	1 (2020)	0	0	0	0	0
Upshur	593	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Van Zandt	859	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Wood	696	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

NOTE This shows the changes in Common Name and Genus/Species from the TPWD database for SGCN.

Other Species that we may target (based on comments from TPWD Biologist Craig Hensley)	
1	River Otter
2	Mink
3	Ringtail
4	Southern Flying Squirrel
5	Nutria
6	Wild Turkey
7	Migrating Birds (at a bird blind, particularly one with water features)
8	Bird Roosts
9	Lakes/ponds with shorelines suitable for shorebirds (gulls, sandpipers, waders, etc...)
10	Flowers/plants for native pollinators
11	
12	