

Summary: Wildlife Management Plan — The Homesteads at Walker Branch

This summary explains the 23-page Wildlife Management Plan that guides conservation work at Walker Branch, complete with site assessments, habitat descriptions, species lists, and implementation protocols.

Who Handles the Work

Plateau Land & Wildlife Management provides all wildlife management services at Walker Branch. This includes planning, habitat assessment, installation, ongoing maintenance, annual monitoring, and all required reporting to Fayette County.

Currently, the entire community operates under one comprehensive plan. When you purchase your homestead, you'll receive your own personalized wildlife management plan tailored to your specific property and filed with Fayette County. Plateau coordinates both community-wide and individual homestead activities, ensuring everything stays aligned and compliant.

This kind of professional planning, execution, and documentation is a core feature of every Wildlife Communities® development by Land Within Reach®.

What Texas Requires vs. What You Get

Texas allows property owners to maintain agricultural property tax rates when they transition from traditional agriculture to wildlife management. To qualify, properties must implement at least three (3) wildlife management practices annually, selected from 7 state-approved categories.

The Homesteads at Walker Branch implements **eleven (11) wildlife management practices** across **6 of the 7 state-approved categories** to create genuinely functional habitat for native Texas wildlife.

This is the difference between checking a box and actually bringing land back to life.

Target Species

This plan focuses on species native to the Post Oak Savannah region:

- Songbirds (including species of conservation concern)
- Mourning Dove
- Wild Turkey
- White-tailed Deer
- Small Mammals
- Native Pollinators (native bees, butterflies, including Monarchs)
- Purple Martin Swallows

These are the primary management targets, but the habitat improvements benefit many additional native species, from raptors and waterfowl to reptiles and amphibians.

What This Means: Category-by-Category

Here's what each of the 7 state-approved categories involves and what The Homesteads at Walker Branch is implementing in each.

Category 1 — Habitat Control

Creating conditions where wildlife can thrive

Range Enhancement (Re-seeding) | Every year, 2027-2031 **The challenge:** Decades of agricultural use have reduced native plant diversity. Non-native grasses like King Ranch bluestem and bermudagrass, which dominate about 1/3rd of the community's acreage, don't properly nourish wildlife and crowd out everything else.

What we're doing: Annually reseeding with native grasses and wildflowers. Species like little bluestem, Indiangrass, and sideoats grama—plants that used to grow here naturally.

Why it matters: Native plants feed birds and pollinators. They hold water in the soil. They bring back the ecosystem this land used to support.

The work: Preparing soil, planting seed at the right time of year, checking back to make sure it's growing.

Brush Management | Every year, 2027-2031 **The challenge:** Yaupon is a native shrub. At normal levels, it's great for wildlife. But it spreads aggressively and forms thickets so dense nothing else can grow.

What we're doing: Cutting back yaupon in areas where it's taken over. Creating variety—some open areas, some edge zones, some thick cover. Using hand tools and targeted herbicide application.

Why it matters: Wildlife needs different types of habitat, such as open areas for feeding, dense cover for nesting, and edge zones where the two meet. Variety is the goal.

The work: Assessing the property every year to identify and treat problem areas, while also piling the brush for small animal cover.

Pollinator Habitat | 2027-2036 **The challenge:** Pollinators, such as Monarch butterflies and native bees, are disappearing due to loss of habitat, pesticides, and lack of food sources.

What we're doing: Planting wildflowers that bloom in the spring and fall. Planting milkweed, the only native plant on which Monarch butterflies will lay their eggs. Protecting existing native bumblebee nest sites, often found in abandoned rodent burrows or hollow logs. Leaving standing dead trees and fallen logs to provide nesting sites for cavity-nesting native bees. Treating fire ants in pollinator areas. Coordinating mowing patterns with wildlife management to protect pollinators while creating beneficial disturbance.

Why it matters: No pollinators, no ecosystem. These species tell you whether the land is healthy. If they come back, everything else is working.

The work: Annual planting and monitoring, documentation of pollinator activity and species observed, protection of nesting sites, coordination with other management activities to prevent conflicts.

Category 2 — Erosion Control

Not needed here at this time

The property's terrain, existing vegetation, and water features do not require active erosion control measures. The grassland work above prevents erosion as a side benefit.

Category 3 — Predator Control

Managing invasive species that harm native wildlife

Fire Ant Control | Every year, 2027-2031 **The challenge:** Imported red fire ants aren't native to Texas. They kill baby birds in their nests, eat seeds and insects that native wildlife needs, and displace other native ant species.

What we're doing: Treating at least 10 acres every year using organic methods—boiling water, citrus oil, or organic baits—in the fall or spring when ants are most active near the surface.

Why it matters: One fire ant mound can destroy multiple bird nests in a season. If you want songbirds, quail, and turkeys, you have to control the fire ants.

The work: Assessing the property every year, finding mounds, and treating them.

Category 4 — Supplemental Water

Ensuring reliable water sources year-round

Wildlife Water Sources | 2027-2036 **The challenge:** While The Homesteads at Walker Branch has two ponds and a seasonal creek, large areas of the property have no water—especially during Texas summers and periods of drought.

What we're doing: Installing six supplemental water towers across the property, fed by well water during dry spells and designed so small animals can drink without drowning (ramps, shallow edges).

Why it matters: Water is often what limits wildlife populations. Reliable water sources support larger, healthier populations and allow species to occupy habitat they would otherwise avoid. Quite simply, we add water to support more wildlife.

The work: Installing the tower systems, keeping them full of water, then cleaning and checking them regularly.

Category 5 — Supplemental Food

Helping wildlife through lean times

Bird Feeders | Every year, 2027-2031 The challenge: Winter is hard. Droughts are hard. Breeding season is hard. Supplemental food helps wildlife survive critical periods.

What we're doing: Maintaining 11 large feeders filled with scratch grain, birdseed, and sunflower seeds (at least 25% sunflower for protein and fat) that are positioned away from houses and designed to keep out raccoons and hogs.

Why it matters: Healthy habitat provides natural food. Feeders fill gaps—winter when natural food is scarce, spring when birds are raising young, droughts when seed production drops.

The work: Filling feeders, regularly cleaning them, and keeping written and photographic records.

Converting Non-Native Grasses | Every year, 2027-2031 The challenge: Acres of King Ranch bluestem and bermudagrass provide almost no value to wildlife. They don't produce seeds. They don't support insects. For native wildlife, they're essentially green deserts.

What we're doing: Gradually converting 22 acres by first planting two seasons of cover crops to rehab the soil, and then overseeding the entirety of the community's grassland prairie acreage with native seed.

Why it matters: This represents habitat restoration at meaningful scale. Converting non-native grass significantly increases food availability (seeds and insects) and cover for all wildlife species.

The work: Assessing areas, preparing soil, planting seed, monitoring results, and adjusting methods based on what works.

Category 6 — Providing Shelter

Nesting sites and protective cover

Nest Boxes | Every year, 2027-2031 The challenge: Loss of mature trees and dead snags means loss of natural cavities that many birds require for nesting. Purple Martins (a breed of swallows) in Texas depend almost entirely on human-provided housing.

What we're doing: Installing and maintaining 43 nesting boxes: - 1 Purple Martin house (at least 4 cavities) on a pole near the pond - 42 bluebird (20), chickadee (8), titmouse (7), and wren (7) boxes spread across grassland areas, 100 yards apart, 3-4 feet high, facing northeast

Why it matters: Nest boxes provide housing, but they also enable monitoring of breeding success, population trends, and overall habitat quality.

The work: Cleaning boxes twice a year (late winter and early fall). Checking for damage. Watching for occupancy and breeding success.

Brush Piles | Every year, 2027-2031 The challenge: Modern land management tends to remove all fallen wood. But many animals (like small mammals, ground-dwelling birds, and reptiles) need dense cover to hide from predators and weather.

What we're doing: Building and maintaining brush piles—6 to 8 feet high, 10 to 15 feet across. Big logs on the bottom, smaller branches on top, open space at the base so animals can get in. Placed in open areas or around young trees (to protect them from deer).

Why it matters: Brush piles are simple but effective. Rabbits, quail, songbirds—they all use brush piles for shelter. Plus, it's a good use of material from brush clearing.

The work: Building new piles or reshaping old ones. Taking photos. Keeping track of locations.

Strategic Mowing | Every year, 2027-2031 The challenge: Mowing everything destroys ground nests and eliminates cover. It makes the land too uniform—wildlife needs variety.

What we're doing: Mowing in strips according to Wildlife Habitat Federation guidance. Leave most of the area unmowed (at least two-thirds). Mow after nesting season (after July 15). Don't mow the same areas every year. Leave buffers around trees and brush piles. Create irregular patterns, not straight lines.

Why it matters: Strip mowing creates variety. Freshly mowed areas expose seeds and insects for birds. Unmowed areas provide nesting cover. Rotating patterns mean something is always growing tall.

The work: Coordinating with WHF on where and when to mow. Documenting mowed areas. Taking before-and-after photos.

Category 7 — Census

Tracking whether our efforts are working

Bird Surveys | Every year, 2027-2031 The challenge: Without monitoring, you don't know if anything you're doing matters. Professional wildlife management requires data.

What we're doing: Annual breeding bird surveys to count and identify every bird seen or heard during April through June when male birds are singing to claim territory. Utilize the latest in bird listening technology (across three BirdWeather PUC listening stations) to track bird activity year-round.

Why it matters: Songbirds are excellent indicators. They're sensitive to habitat changes. If songbird numbers and diversity go up over time, your habitat work is succeeding.

Data applications: - Identifying which habitat improvements provide greatest benefit - Documenting presence of species of conservation concern - Providing property owners annual reports on wildlife populations

The work: Annual surveys by a qualified biologist from Plateau. Comparing results year to year. Writing annual reports. Adjusting management based on what the data shows.

Final Thoughts

The full 23-page plan contains all of the technical details, like site assessments, species lists, protocols, and monitoring requirements. This summary helps you understand what that plan means in practice.

You own the land. You enjoy the wildlife. The professional management is handled for you.

Questions? Your Land Within Reach team can connect you with Plateau Land & Wildlife Management to discuss any part of this program.