CITY OF AUSTIN
FERAL HOG CONTROL PROGRAM

BALCONES CANYONLANDS PRESERVE ANNUAL REPORT
Fiscal Year 2001-02

The City of Austin
Water and Wastewater Utility
Wildland Conservation Division
Balcones Canyonlands Preserve Program

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BACKGROUND

City of Austin Balcones Canyonlands Preserve (BCP) staff initially observed feral hogs and their damage to Preserve properties during the late 1990s. In response to safety concerns and observations of habitat damage, BCP staff began to control hog populations in January 2001. More background on the BCP's hog efforts can found in the Balcones Canyonlands Preserve 2000-2001 Annual Report.

METHODS

Between October 1, 2001 and September 30, 2002, BCP staff moved nine baited traps between eight locations. They included one pen trap and eight enclosed traps with trap doors See Table I.

Trap site criteria included:

- Proximity to observed hog activity
- Proximity to BCP cowbird traps, as needed.
- Available shade
- Accessibility by truck

Traps were baited with soaked, fermented corn kernels made with dry kernels, water and fermented starter from the previous batch.

Traps were checked three times a week during mild weather and daily during early summer. The traps were closed over weekends, holidays and during wet periods when the roads become impassable. On June 17, after several weeks without success, the traps were closed until September 3.

Trap site methodology

- Non-target animals were released from the traps.
- Trap doors were reset and adjusted as necessary.
- The trap's bait was replenished.
- Trap status was recorded on a field-data form noting the hog's sex and approximate weight, any non-target animals and the mechanical condition of the trap. These data were transferred to an Excel file on the BCP server.
- If the trap contains one or more hogs, the BCP office and the individuals contracted to dispose of the hogs were contacted to ensure immediate removal of the hog(s).

Two private citizens and the BCP program manager are permitted to dispatch the trapped hogs and dispose of their carcasses. The BCP permit states that the hogs are to be dispatched before removal from the traps using a 0.22 caliber rim-fire cartridge.

RESULTS

Date	Ivanhoe	Upper Bull Creek		Park West	Reicher	Cortaña
		Canyon Creek	Franklin, Hanks, Lanier			
10/15/01	1 ♂, 90 lb					
02/04/02				2 ♀, 90 & 95 lb		
02/13/00					1 ♂, 230 lb	
02/15/02				2 ♀ 1 piglet		
03/04/02		1 ♂				
03/04/02	1 ♂ 5 piglets					
03/05/02			4 piglets, 15 lb @			
03/11/02		1 ♀, 75 lb 2 piglets, 10 lb @				
04/19/02		1, sex unknown				
04/22/02	1 ♂, 175 lb					
05/05/02			2 ♂, 35 and 40 lb			
06/17/02			1 ♀, 30 lb			
09/04/02						6 ♀, 75-170 lb 3 ♂, 65-80 lb
09/06/02						2 ♀, 90-95 lb 3 ♂, 80-100 lb
09/21/02						1 ♀, 125 lb 7 piglets, 12 lb @
09/27/02						3 piglets approx. 5 lb @
Total 51 hogs	3 males 0 females 5 piglets	1 male 1 female 2 piglets 1 unknown	2 males 1 female 4 piglets	0 males 4 females 1 piglet	1 male	6 males 9 females 10 piglets
Summary	13 males, 15 females, 22 piglets, 1 unknown sex					

CONCLUSIONS

During fiscal year 2001-2002, 51 hogs were trapped on the Balcones Canyonlands Preserve: 13 males, 15 females, 22 piglets and one unknown sex. During fiscal year 2000-2001, BCP staff trapped 62 hogs.

This year's experience with "trap wise" hogs confirmed that feral hogs learn to avoid baited traps after a short period. Typically, traps in a new location were successful for two weeks or less after which hogs avoided the traps. At this point, the traps were moved to a new location.

Based on the number of reports from Preserve neighbors and field observations by staff, the BCP hog trapping effort will continue for several years, if not indefinitely. The absence of hog-proof fencing around the Preserve and the general lack of hog control among Preserve neighbors contributes to continued hog migration into the Preserve. Additionally, the Balcones Canyonlands Preserve provides a significant amount of suitable habitat for this very mobile and fecund non-native species.