# CITY OF AUSTIN FERAL HOG CONTROL EFFORTS

## BALCONES CANYONLANDS ANNUAL REPORT
## Fiscal Year 2000-01

The City of Austin
Parks & Recreation Department
Natural Resources Division

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December, 2001

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#### *BACKGROUND*

City of Austin Balcones Canyonlands Preserve (BCP) staff initially observed feral hogs and feral hog damage to Preserve properties during the late 1990s. Within a short time, area biologists and land managers formed a consensus that rapidly increasing feral hog populations had become a problem. Jester Estates residents reported hog incursions onto residential property from Ivanhoe and staff observation of hogs, hog prints and hog wallows increased. In response to concerns that this non-native species would damage Preserve habitat and endanger personnel and hikers, Preserve staff began to research hog trapping methods.

#### *METHODS*

In January 2001, BCP staff set up four baited hog traps on the Ivanhoe tract within the Bull Creek Preserve. Three were fully enclosed traps purchased from fabricators and one was a pen trap constructed by BCP staff. The pen trap's open top allowed trapped white-tailed deer to escape easily.

Trap site criteria included:

- Proximity to observed hog activity
- In some cases, proximity to our cowbird traps (to save staff time)
- Available shade
- Accessibility by truck

Using information found on *Texasboars.com*, the traps were initially baited with soured corn kernels mixed with a small amount of diesel fuel. The diesel was to repel non-target animals including white-tailed deer, wild turkeys, squirrels, birds, foxes, raccoons and opossums. Unfortunately, as rain washed away the diesel, the mixture's repellent properties decreased. Concerns about diesel toxicity to non-target animals and the ground water prompted us to try soured corn kernels mixed with hog meat, a mixture thought to attract hogs exclusively. This mixture's rank odor and potential for bacterial contamination caused us to abandon it. We feel that the inherent dangers of the first two mixes outweigh the advantage of repelling non-target species. We are currently using soaked fermented corn kernels with no additives.

Staff set up a coordinated schedule to check the traps three times a week during mild weather and daily during the summer. The traps are closed over weekends and holidays and during wet periods when the roads leading to the traps become impassable. Those checking the traps follow the procedure below.

- If the trap contains non-target animals, we use a re-bar hook to carefully open the door from the outside and release the animal.
- Released trap doors are reset and adjusted as necessary.
- The trap's bait is replenished.
- Each individual trap's status is recorded on a form taken to the field. We make note of any trapped hog's sex and approximate weight. We also note trapped non-target animals and the mechanical condition of the trap.
- If the trap contains one or more hogs, we call the BCP office, then contact the individuals contracted to dispose of the hogs.

The Parks Department and BCP office issued a permit to two private citizens to humanely shoot the trapped hogs and dispose of their carcasses. The permit states that the hogs are to be shot dead before they are removed from the traps using a .22 caliber rim-fire cartridges. These individuals are contacted from the field immediately upon finding trapped hogs.

As the year progressed, we added four additional full-enclosure traps. The pen trap was removed from service due to a mechanical problem. At the end of the fiscal year, seven traps (four round, three rectangular) were distributed throughout the Preserve. BCP staff moved these traps at irregular intervals depending upon trap success and locally observed hog activity.

***RESULTS***

| Date | Ivanhoe *1-4 traps* | Upper Bull Creek | | Park West *1 trap* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | **Canyon Creek** *2 traps* | **Franklin, Hanks, Lanier, WTP4,** *3 traps* | |
| 2/09/01 | 1 ♂ 120 lb | | | |
| 3/12/01 | 1 ♂ 145 lb | | | |
| 3/29/01 | 3 piglets | | | |
| 4/29/01 | 1 ♂ 225-250 lb | | | |
| 5/02/01 | | | 1 ♀ 60 lb<br>1 ♂ piglet, 35 lb | |
| 50/7/01 | | | 1 ♀: 95 lb<br>2 ♀ piglets, 25, 35 lb | |
| 5/09/01 | | 1 ♂ 110 lb | | |
| 5/13/01 | 1 ♂ 160 lb | 3 piglets (@20 lb) | | |
| 5/18/01 | | | 2 ♀, 45, 55 lb | |
| 5/21/01 | | | 1 ♂, 110 lb | |
| 5/25/01 | | | 2 ♀, 85 lb | |
| 5/30/01 | 1 ♂ 85 lb | | | |
| 6/01/01 | | | | |
| 6/02/01 | | 2 adults 60 & 75 lb, 3 piglets (@ 25 lb) | | |
| 6/03/01 | | | 1 ♀ 80 lb<br>1 ♂ piglet 25 lb | |
| 6/05/01 | | | 2 adults | |
| 6/09/01 | | | 2 ♀ (@ 50 lb)<br>2 ♀ piglets (@ 20 lb) | |
| 6/10/01 | | 1 ♀, 2 piglets | | |
| 6/15/01 | | 4 piglets (@ 25 lb) | | |
| 6/17/01 | | | 1 ♀ piglet 28 lb<br>1 ♂ 60 lb | |
| 6/23/01 | | 1 ♂ 80 lb | | |
| 6/24/01 | | | 1 ♀ 75 lb | |
| 6/26/01 | | | 1 ♂ 200 lb | |
| 6/30/01 | | | 1 ♀ 83 lb | |
| 7/11/01 | | | | 2 ♀, 5 piglets |
| 7/30/01 | | 1 adult 90 lb | | |
| 8/8/01 | | | | 1 adult, 100 lb |
| 8/10/01 | | 3 adults (@ 85 lb) | | |
| 8/17/01 | | | | 1 ♂ 105 lb |
| 8/20/01 | | | 1 ♂ 70 lb | |
| Sub-totals | **8**<br>5 ♂<br>3 piglets | **21**<br>2 ♂; 1 ♀<br>6 adults, unknown sex<br>12 piglets | **24**<br>4 ♂; 11 ♀<br>2 adults, unknown se<br>7 piglets | **9**<br>1 ♂; 2 ♀<br>1 adult, unknown sex<br>5 piglets |
| | | | | ***TOTAL 62*** |

### *CONCLUSIONS*

BCP staff feels that the small round full-enclosure traps are the easiest to move, though the less mobile pen traps allow white-tailed deer and other non-target species to escape easily. We will try larger pen traps which may trap larger individual hogs and groups of hogs. We suspect that those hogs left outside the smaller traps become 'trap-wise' and increasingly difficult to trap. There is general agreement that moving the traps throughout the season contributes to success. We may also try hunting "trap-wise" hogs. This would be accomplished by setting up deer feeders to release corn at set intervals in areas of high hog activity. Hunters would be stationed in nearby blinds. Though we may try additional bait mixtures, our current mix of fermented corn kernels and water is effective and safe.

Though the short duration of this effort precludes any real prediction of future efforts, BCP staff feels that hog trapping on the Preserve will continue for some time. The absence of hog-proof fencing around the Preserve and the general lack of hog control among Preserve neighbors contributes to continued migration into the Preserve. Unfortunately, the Balcones Canyonlands Preserve provides suitable habitat for this very mobile and very fecund non-native species.




Figure One- Sow feral pig caught in large rectangular trap.