

1783 Bravenec Lane Ranch

This property has been in my family for over a century. It is a part of the Four League Grant from the republic of Mexico to Stephen F. Austin in 1830. It consists of contiguous rolling terrain bordered on two sides by active streams; the West Fork of Mill Creek and Long Branch. The land is about 80% open pasture and 20% wooded, split between native upper prairie, and bottomland in the flood plain. My parents built the first residence on this land in 1934; the windmill that provided our water still works fine. I added a weekend home in 1991.

This is a unique property for someone who loves nature and the outdoors. It is at the end of a private road and can only be accessed by owners or their guests. There is no through traffic of any kind. The nearest public road is one mile away, so not even passing cars mar the quiet peacefulness. Songbirds, owls, hawks and crows are usually the only thing one hears, with tree frogs and cicadas adding sound to summer nights.

Hunting and fishing were popular outdoor activities for my family. White-tailed deer are plentiful and frequently seen on the property. The pond is stocked with Florida-strain large mouthed bass and bluegill perch and has provided many hours of fishing enjoyment for children and adults alike. Mill Creek has some deep holes that harbor catfish and carp. Migratory ducks use the pond in fall and winter; herons and egrets use it year-round.

Every spring brings a plethora of bluebonnets and other wildflowers. Wild Mustang grapes, dewberries and American Beautyberries are plentiful and make great jelly for your use or as gifts to friends. The numerous pecan trees provide nuts which make an excellent Thanksgiving pie for a family gathered in the country for the holiday. If you like hot peppers, native chiltepes grow around the house and make great spicy sauce and seasonings. One of our outdoor hobbies has been to seek, identify and record the many different species of flora and fauna on the property. Our species list now includes over seventy different wildflowers, fifty trees and shrubs including several rare black walnut trees, seventy birds, twenty mammals including coyotes and bobcats, over a dozen butterflies and seventeen different reptiles.

The land has been granted a wildlife exemption by the local appraisal district, thus enjoys lower property taxes as if it were used for agriculture purposes. We have chosen deer, raptors and eastern meadowlarks as our target species for habitat enhancement. The open pasture has been returned to native grasses in most areas. Hay is harvested once or twice annually, thus keeping the vegetation level relatively low to allow raptors to see field rodents, and for flocks of over a hundred meadowlarks to enjoy during their winter migration. Cutting or shredding the pasture grass exposes new growth forbs upon which deer graze like cattle on a pasture. Small food plots of winter peas, sunflowers and mixed grains are planted to provide supplemental food for deer and birds.

We have been encouraged to open the property for rental use but have never done so. If desired by the owner, it should be a very attractive retreat for families from Houston who want a quiet weekend in unspoiled natural surroundings. Six generations of my family have lived, visited, worked and played here since 1898. My grandchildren really loved exploring on their own in their ATV's; we even orchestrated an ATV-based Easter egg hunt! It will be with sadness but fond memories that I pass ownership and the responsibility for maintaining and enhancing this unique little corner of rural Texas to a new owner. I hope you, as have I, enjoy sitting on the deck at dawn with a cup of coffee, hearing the cardinals awake and start calling to each other, and watching a doe with her fawn eating in the pasture below the house.

Frances Bravenec Woodrick

July 3, 2019