

2022

HUNTERS' EDITION



KAYE MCDANIEL | COURTESY PHOTO

Lampasas  Dispatch Record

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The image shows three men standing in a room filled with taxidermy. On the left, a man in a maroon polo shirt and a red cap holds a handgun. In the center, a man in a grey t-shirt and a grey cap holds a rifle. On the right, a man in a grey t-shirt and a grey cap stands with his hands crossed. The room has several taxidermy deer heads mounted on the walls and a large taxidermy deer lying on a wooden table in the center. The table is supported by two large HVAC units. In the background, there are boxes, including one labeled "American PRIDE" and another labeled "TEXAIR".

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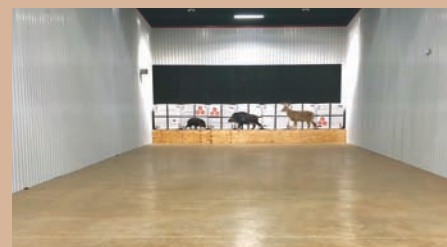
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A special thanks to our guest contributors:
Jed Dunning, Mike Linder, Randy McGuire, Ed Thomas, Cathy Tower

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Conditions could lead to slight downturn for the 2022-2023 hunting season

BY HUNTER KING
DISPATCH RECORD

It is no secret that Texas has been short on rain this year. Because of that, all of us who hunt fear there could be negative ramifications associated with deer season.

There is a fairly obvious connection between rainfall in the summer and offseason months and whitetail success in the fall.

More rain creates better vegetation growth, which means the deer have more to eat and, specifically, the bucks have better nutrition to feed on in the growing stage of their antlers in the summer.

Because of the drought, less has been available for the deer to eat. That correlates to worse antler growth, possible loss of fawns at a higher rate than

normal and an overall decline in herd health.

Despite the not-so-great conditions in Texas, the state remains one of the best places in the country to hunt whitetail.

“Overall, 2022 is expected to be good in terms of harvest numbers and opportunities, so don’t let the chance to spend time afield with family, friends and fellow hunters pass you by,” said Alan Cain, white-tailed deer program leader for the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. “Texas has one of the longest deer seasons in the nation, so take some time this fall and winter and enjoy one of the best deer herds in the country right here in your home state.”

Cain said that overall, hunters should expect to see average to below-average antler growth and body weight this fall.

Some rain was measured in Texas shortly before the beginning of archery season in October. That

rain created vegetation growth and kept deer from going to feeders as often as they would have otherwise. We shall see if that trend continues into rifle season. As strictly a bow hunter myself, I have observed firsthand that reticence to come to feeders, and it has created an interesting early season.

The vegetation and acorns are good for the deer population, though, and it is nothing but positive that they now have something like that to eat.

On the property I hunt, we did lose several fawns in the summer. And while it is hard to know for sure whether antler growth is down, I have seen a couple of bucks on trail cameras and on the hoof that I saw last year and thought they might be bigger than they are now, but that is just an educated guess.

Regardless, there isn’t anything like hunting season. The ability to get out in the woods with family and friends is something all of us love to do.



KAYE MCDANIEL | COURTESY PHOTO

This mature buck with a bit of an uneven rack could be the kind of deer many hunters see this year after a drought and a lack of food damaged antler growth in the offseason.

LAMPASAS COUNTY HUNTING SEASONS

White-tailed Deer
Archery only
Youth-only
General Season
^Special late season
Bag limit: five deer, no more than two bucks (all seasons combined).
Antler restrictions apply.

Turkey
Fall Season
Archery only
Youth-only
Regular season
Spring Season
Youth-only
Regular season
Bag limit: four (all seasons combined), no more than one of which may be an Eastern turkey.
Fall season: either sex

Duck
Youth-only
Regular season
Daily bag limit: six in the aggregate. Possession limit: Three times the daily bag limit. For details on species limitations, see 2022-2023 Texas Waterfowl Digest.

Quail
Regular season
Daily bag limit: 15. Possession limit: 45.

Dove
Sept. 1 - Oct. 30, 2022; and Dec. 17, 2022-Jan. 15, 2023
Daily bag limit: 15 (no more than two white-tipped). Possession limit: 45
^ During the special late season, take is restricted to antlerless and “unbranched antlered” deer. An unbranched antlered deer is a buck with at least one antler that has no more than one point.

Oct. 1-Nov. 4, 2022
Oct. 29-30, 2022; Jan. 2-15, 2023
Nov. 5, 2022-Jan. 1, 2023
Jan. 2-15, 2023

Oct. 1-Nov. 4, 2022
Oct. 29-30, 2022; Jan. 2-15, 2023
Nov. 5, 2022-Jan. 1, 2023

March 25-26, May 20-21, 2023
April 1- May 14, 2023

Spring season: gobblers or bearded hens

Nov. 5-6, 2022
Nov. 12-27, 2022; Dec. 3, 2022-Jan. 29, 2023

Oct. 29, 2022-Feb. 26, 2023

Deer camp: More than hunting, it's an escape

BY HUNTER KING
DISPATCH RECORD

The deer camp is a place where hunters all across the country can go to escape from work and all the other stresses that come with daily life. It's often a place where boys become men, fathers and sons grow their relationship, and friends build camaraderie.

The stories that come from deer camp last a lifetime and often are passed down for generations.

I remember stories my dad has told me about my grandfather and the giant mule deer he killed. I can't wait to tell my future

children stories of deer my dad killed and of the deer I have harvested while with my dad.

I have spent several months of the year at a deer camp ever since I was a kid. Everything I've learned about hunting, the outdoors and life I was taught during and in between hunts at camp.

As hunters, we all love telling the story of a special buck we have taken, and there is no better place to do that than at camp with the friends sharing the hunt.

A family friend that I have hunted with for seven or eight years now killed the biggest buck of his life in 2016 – a deer we named

Splitter because of his several forks and kickers on the rack. I will never forget getting my friend's text that he had shot the deer that morning and then heading over after the hunt to help him track the deer.

Once we had the deer cleaned up, we spent several hours at camp before the afternoon hunt, admiring what he had done and talking about the experience.

Those kinds of memories only happen at a deer camp, and it is something I will never forget.

HUNTER KING is the sports editor for the Lampasas Dispatch Record.



HUNTER KING | DISPATCH RECORD

Wouldn't you be excited to head back to deer camp and tell your friends about the giant buck you saw that morning?

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Simplest way to sight in your rifle

BY ED THOMAS
SPECIAL CONTRIBUTOR

In my years of guiding hunters, two of the most common reasons for missing shots at game are rifles that are not sighted in properly and using a rifle with too much recoil.

Many believe they can have a gunsmith boresight a rifle and go hunting, but that is not properly sighting a rifle.

The other group think they have to have the latest super-magnum to be accepted by the group at the deer lease. I shoot a .243 most of the time, and the game on the pole along with the shots I make prove it up year after year.

Above all, be safe with your firearms, don't mix alcohol and guns, take a kid with you hunting, and have fun. I hope the following information on sighting in your rifle will help you learn a little.

IMPORTANT FIRST STEPS

A man sent me an email asking if there is an easy way to sight in a rifle. He said he had gone through several boxes of ammo to sight in his rifle.

I have heard this many times and always wonder what is wrong that it takes so many shots.

Remember, the scope must be mounted correctly, and all must be tight in order to sight in properly. I won't go into that here. If you do not know how to mount a scope correctly, have someone who does help you the first couple of times or have a professional gunsmith do it for you.

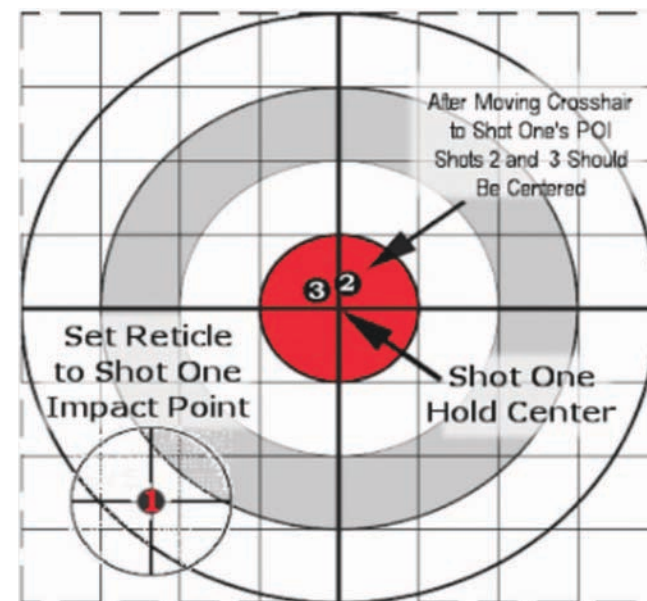
Do not let some kid in a big-box store mount your scope. I have had to remount lots of scopes for clients through the years.

Bore sighting a firearm means it might be on the paper; it does not mean you have a firearm that is sighted in properly. Bore sighting usually will get the shots on the paper, but not always.

I have seen lots of people miss with a gun that has been bore-sighted. If I had known that they had not sighted in the rifle properly, I would not have been hunting with them.

Every barrel and different ammo will impact differently and must be shot in properly on a target.

Remember also that if your rifle barrel has been cleaned since firing or it is a brand-new rifle, you should fire a couple of fouling shots before sighting in. Many rifles will not shoot to the same point of



COURTESY PHOTO

With an accurate sight-in, a hunter can save time and use a lot less ammo. Try this method to ensure you are on target.

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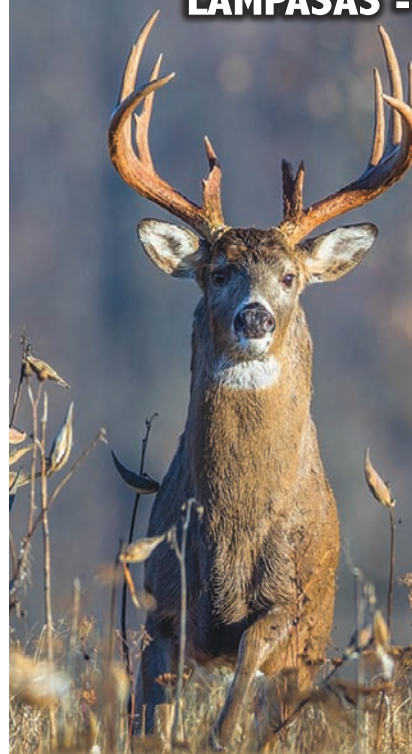
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Bore-sighting is not proper way to prepare rifle

impact with a clean, oiled barrel as they will with a fouled barrel.

SIGHTING IN THAT RIFLE

Here is the fastest and simplest way I know to sight in a rifle. I usually start at 25 yards so I will be on the paper. Even a bore sighted rifle may not be on the paper at long range.

I get a solid gun vice or some way to hold the rifle in place so it will not move. A cardboard box with two V cutouts to rest the rifle across can be used in a pinch.

I fire one shot at the bull's-eye and then make sure the crosshair is lined up on the center of the bull's-eye.

Making sure not to move the rifle, adjust the elevation and windage until the crosshair is exactly centered on the bullet hole where the shot you just fired hit. This means move the center of the reticle to the actual center of the bullet hole of your shot.

Next, carefully fire a second shot at the bull's-eye. If you did not move the rifle while adjusting the scope and you can shoot, the second shot should be in the bull's-eye.

In reality, most will need a few more shots for small adjustments to get into the center of the bull,

but this is a lot faster than most other methods and uses a lot less ammo.

Now move to the 100-yard target, and finish sighting in with whatever small adjustments are needed to get you where you want to be on the target.

ED THOMAS is a licensed falconer, trapper, hunter, shotgun instructor and fisherman who lives in Lampasas County. See his award-winning "Wild Ed's Texas Outdoors" blog at wildedtx.blogspot.com.



ED THOMAS | COURTESY PHOTO

This buck could be the one that got away if your rifle is not sighted in properly.



HUNTER KING | DISPATCH RECORD

This .308 bolt action rifle was sighted in on a Dead Shot Field Pod rest. The tripod keeps the gun steady and allows for the best results.





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The Ten Commandments of Hunting

BY ALEXANDRIA RANDOLPH
DISPATCH RECORD

Some hunters may be accused of hunting religiously. Even so, keeping track of the laws and regulations issued by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department may seem daunting. Several years ago, Lampasas County Game Wardens Shaun Bayless and Ray Milloway shared their guidance for hunters. From the game wardens' comments, the Dispatch Record compiled the Ten Commandments of Hunting, and that is reprinted below.

1. Thou shalt not shoot toward thy neighbor.

Shooting in a safe direction is a common safety issue, Bayless said.

"These are the things that people ignore: shooting across property lines or discharging a firearm so that your projectile crosses property lines," as well as shooting in the direction of a neighbor's blind, Bayless said.

"Be mindful of your surroundings," Milloway said. "Some of these leases aren't the biggest pieces of land. ... There is no minimum or maximum acreage restriction that the state requires."

A simple way to avoid danger is to communicate with neighbors before hunting and learn where their blinds, homes, barns and children's play areas are located in relation to your blind.

"Whoever is shooting is responsible for that," Milloway said.



JAKE PUDA | COURTESY PHOTO

This appears to be a legal buck for an antler restriction county, like Lampasas, as the antlers are wider than the ears when the ears are in the alert position.

Remember: If it walks on two legs, it's not a deer.

2. Thou shalt obey gun safety rules.

Gun safety is of utmost importance, Bayless said. "In a very high percentage of issues we deal with, people ignore the most basic gun safety," he said.

Common safety mistakes include leaving a gun loaded, relying on a safety mechanism or pointing a gun in the wrong direction (or at another person).

"All it takes is one slip-up or accident for something bad to happen," Bayless said.

He reminded adults that they will be held responsible and liable for accidents that occur involving their children.

When in doubt, don't point your gun at any friends you mind losing.

3. Thou shalt take required hunter education.

Anyone born on or after Sept. 2, 1971 is required to successfully complete a Hunter Education Course, Milloway said. That also applies to hunters from out of state.

The hunter education course can be taken online at www.hunter-ed.com using a smartphone, tablet, laptop or desktop computer.

Children age 17 or under who register for the exam also must attend a mandatory field day.

4. Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's deer.

Bayless and Milloway often have to deal with hunting ethics violations during the season, the game wardens said.

"You can't put forth an effort to disrupt your neighbor's hunting because you don't want them shooting deer," Bayless said. "It's more common than you think."

Bayless said he has seen cases where a neighbor will place motion-sensing lights or noise makers – the type one would place by a front door at Halloween – at a property line to scare deer away from a neighbor's feeder. He's also seen a gorilla suit "scarecrow" strategically placed at a fence line.

Milloway suggested trying to talk with one's neighbor about the problem first before calling a game warden.

"We hear people say, 'They're trying to steal deer from my property,'" he said. "Just know that once you get the law involved, it might ruin what relationship you do have with your neighbor."

Under the Texas Hunter Harassment Law, intentionally interfering, harassing or disturbing the act of hunting or trapping is punishable by a fine of \$200 to \$2,000 and/or 180 days in jail.

It's also punishable by an eternal cold shoulder from the offended neighbor.

5. Thou shalt know and obey antler restrictions.

Many hunters struggle with the county's antler restriction rules, even years after their implementation, Bayless said.

"That generally carries the steepest fines," he said.

Sometimes, not taking the shot could save a pretty penny -- possibly up to \$1,000.

"If you look at a deer at 100 to 150 yards and you can't determine that it's without a doubt legal, the best approach is to let that deer walk," Bayless said. "Once you shoot, it's in your possession, and you're putting yourself in a situation you don't have to be in."

In Lampasas County, the bag limit for whitetail bucks is two, but only one may have an inside spread of 13 inches or greater.

6. Thou shalt not hunt along public roadways.

Milloway said anything in a roadway, which is considered to be "fence line to fence line," is off limits.

"You can't possess anything that was hit, shot or caught in the fence" along the roadway, he said. "We catch people year round cutting antlers off deer. All of that is illegal. Leave it where it's at."

In addition to being illegal, taking dead animals from the roadway is also a great way to cause a collision – or contract a disease.

It also is illegal to discharge a firearm across a public road.

The only exception to the roadway rules is for the capture of certain reptiles and amphibians.

7. Thou shalt notify family of the location of a hunting lease.

"If you hunt by yourself, tell someone where you are," Bayless said. "Tell somebody a name of something somewhere," whether it be a city, county, roadway or specific lease address.

"That's a huge safety factor," Bayless said. "That way, if you have an accident or you don't come home, they can tell me where to look for you."

8. Thou shalt not steal thy wife's or children's tags.

"You can't use your wife or kid's tags," Bayless reminded hunters.

In Texas, if you steal your spouse's tags, you may not have a spouse to return to when you get back from the lease.

State law also requires any hunter 17 years of age or older to carry a valid driver's license or personal ID certificate issued by the Texas Department of Public Safety.

9. Thou shalt report wrongdoing.

"If you do see something as a landowner or in public, report it immediately," Bayless said. "Don't wait until you get home, because I won't be able to catch them."

10. Thou shalt ask for help when it is needed.

Lampasas County game wardens ask that citizens call them for information or help if needed.

"Call us if you need something," Bayless said. "That's more important than any violation."

Bayless can be reached at 325-203-7817. Milloway can be reached at 512-734-1627.

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The joy is in the silence

BY ALEXANDRIA RANDOLPH

DISPATCH RECORD

It is just before dawn. The sweeping dusky blues of night are fading, transforming the skies with brushstrokes of purple and gray. The chilled air is still. It nips at my exposed nose and causes my eyes to brim with water.

I blink away the moisture and fix my gaze on a distant hill where I can see the first hints of a tree line silhouetted in the growing light. Their shadowy forms are emerging against the sky.

Soon, I will be able to make out the shapes of the birds that flit across the brushy landscape, jumping from cedar to cedar. And after that, if I am lucky, my sight may catch the graceful form of a doe striding slowly among the thorny undergrowth.

But even with thoughts of what may come, my heart still clings to that which is filling this moment: the rising light, the call of mourning doves across the field and the quiet that seems to blanket the world around me.

This is why I hunt.

These, above all, are the moments I cherish when the sun rises, and I am hiking with my hunting partners back to our makeshift camp with our rifles at our backs and our hands empty.

While I've been on a number of hunting trips and taken a few shots, I've never harvested a deer, but that doesn't make the trip less exciting to me. I'm never disappointed in the hunting trip, no matter the result of the hunt.

I don't aim to be misunderstood — I relish the result of a successful hunt as much as any other hunter. I've hunted for population control, for meat, and simply for the fun of it. I've harvested racoon and mourning dove on more than one occasion.

Harvesting an animal is a sacred act that in and of itself should be celebrated. The flesh of a harvested animal is to be eaten and enjoyed, and their majestic form can be honored and respected for many generations through the art of taxidermy.

I look forward to the day I can fell a deer and bring it home to my family. But for now, I am patient.

For me, it's more about the communion with nature and the participation in an act as old and noble as time itself, than it is about the take-home. It's about the waiting much more than the reward.

I'll admit that most often, I enjoy sitting in the silence of the blind, watching the world rouse as the light of first dawn spills over the hills, far much more than I enjoy raising my rifle to take a shot.

In fact, those moments of solace in the wilderness are so moving, sometimes I dread the coming of dawn.



ALEXANDRIA RANDOLPH | DISPATCH RECORD

A doe sneaks through a cedar thicket on a Comal County property during hunting season.

With it comes the impetus of movement — of action and expectation — that I am often not ready to obey.

The most enchanting aspect of hunting for me is not truly the hunt at all. Rather, it's in those moments of stillness when I am sharing time, space and perhaps a bit of the truest part of my soul with the forests and animals with which I share this glorious earth.

The joy is in the silence.

ALEXANDRIA RANDOLPH is the features editor for the Dispatch Record.

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The .22 Long Rifle is part of America's heritage

BY RANDY MCGUIRE
SPECIAL TO THE DISPATCH RECORD

In 1845, Louis-Nicolas Flobert invented the BB cap (Bulleted Breech cap) for indoor target shooting. The BB cap was a small .22 caliber cartridge with no powder charge, just a percussion cap to propel the bullet.

The BB cap was followed by the .22 short and eventually the black powder version of the .22 Long.

With its popularity growing, the .22 Long was eventually modified into the .22 Long Rifle and launched in 1887 by the Stevens Arms Company. The cartridge has been one of the most well-liked rounds by shooters and small game hunters ever since.

The .22 Long Rifle or .22 LR is used in many venues – from Olympic events like the biathlon, pistol and rifle competition to marksmanship training for young and new shooters (Project Appleseed) to military rifle and pistol training.

The low-cost, low-recoil, lightweight firearms and low noise (with subsonic ammunition) make the .22 Long Rifle universally accepted around the world. It is undoubtedly one of the favorite cartridges of all time.

So, what are the practical uses of the .22 LR, besides training young shooters or use in competition? Actually, the .22 LR probably has bagged more small game and gotten rid of more pesky varmints than any other round.

Many boys grew up with a trusty .22 LR rifle that harvested squirrels and rabbits for supper and kept the barn free of rats, skunks and other vermin. For many rural boys, the .22 was their first firearm and still holds a place of endearment in their gun safe.

A story was told by a Remington Arms representative of an American Eskimo who used a

Remington Nylon .22 to dispatch seals from his kayak for food and fur up near the Arctic Circle. The rifle had been sent back to the factory for repair after apparently firing over 100,000 rounds. Remington awarded the man with a brand-new rifle and a generous supply of ammunition in exchange for the worn-out rifle.

This story attests to the durability of most .22 firearms and accounts for the many antique .22s passed down through the years from our fathers

and grandfathers that are still in good working condition.

Today's .22 LR firearms are similar to the .22s of

yesteryear. Lever actions like the American-made Henry rifles, single-shot versions of Steven's Arms first .22, semi-automatic icons – such as the Ruger 10-22, sophisticated Olympic competition rifles and pistols, and even AR-15 versions and conversion kits for .22 LR – are available from around \$100 all the way up to five figures for the Olympic competition models. The accuracy of the simple .22 has never been better, but ammunition development has been just as forward thinking.

The standard .22 LR round is one inch long and has a .22" diameter 40-grain waxed round-nose lead heeled bullet (the bullet is the same size as the case but has a smaller "heel" that is crimped into the case) and has a typical muzzle velocity of around 1,100 feet per second. These are used primarily for target practice and plinking tin cans or other targets.

High speed .22 LR ammo is still generally a 40-grain bullet but could be copper-plated and is fashioned as a round nose or hollow point bullet. Again at 1,200-plus fps, plinking is the usual use, but the hollow points develop enough energy to safely and humanely take small game and vermin.

The special super high-speed .22 LR ammo usually has a copper-plated bullet of between 30 and 35

grains and is usually a constructed hollow point or fragmenting lead bullet designed to transmit all its energy to the target, making it ideal for small game hunting.

The 1,400- to 1,600 fps produce as much as 200-foot lbs. of muzzle energy and shoot flatter than standard or high-speed ammunition. The ever-popular .22 LR now becomes a 75-yard bunny or squirrel getter with these developments.

Specialty rounds also exist as snake shot with very small size 12 shot but a deadly pattern for rattlesnakes, copperheads and water moccasins at close range.

Higher specific tolerance match ammo is used by serious competitors. There are even .22 LR rounds designed for personal defense, however a .22 LR is not recommended as a primary defensive weapon.

For 135 years, the .22 Long Rifle cartridge has been part of America's heritage and character. It has probably, more than any other round, become "America's Favorite."

RANDY MCGUIRE is a retired U.S. Army pilot and former Lampasas County elections administrator. He started reloading shotguns as a teenager and now enjoys the sport of long-range shooting.

What are the practical uses of the .22 Long Rifle, besides training young shooters or use in competition? Actually, the .22 LR probably has bagged more small game and varmints than any other round.



This .22 Long Rifle has been in the King family for at least three generations. Gary King used this gun while he was trapping as a teenager.

HUNTER KING | DISPATCH RECORD

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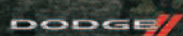
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The story of my first turkey harvest

BY MIKE LINDER
SPECIAL TO THE DISPATCH RECORD

I often hunt with a college pal whom I have been friends with for over 30 years. Last year we hunted for spring turkey, and he got one that is being mounted now.

This year, we again found ourselves in a blind together hunting spring turkey. My buddy has a turkey call, and one mild, calm morning we commenced calling just at daybreak.

After a little while, we heard some toms call back. Then we used our hen call, and back and forth the calling went.

The turkeys got closer and closer, until two toms came into view in our front-left window at about 25 feet out -- both in full strut and just gorgeous.

My friend got his shotgun ready and put it out the window. I waited for the boom ... and waited

... and waited, but no boom.

I looked at him and nudged his leg as if to say, "Hey, why aren't you shooting?" He put the gun down, looked at me and said, "They are too beautiful."

After a minute or two, both toms left and circled behind our blind.

"Give me the dang gun," I told my friend. He did, and I took aim and shot one of them out of the back window.

I agree that they were beautiful. Although I had hunted turkey before and casually hunted them during deer season when turkey season overlaps, I had never gotten one. I figured it was time, since I am 53 and will not live forever.

I considered my buddy a turkey for not taking the shot, and some may consider me a turkey for taking the shot.

Both may be true, but it was a beautiful sunny morning and an exciting hunt with a good old pal.



MIKE LINDER | COURTESY PHOTO

Mike Linder poses with the tom he killed while hunting with his buddy. This was his first turkey ever taken.

Thank you for reading the Lampasas Dispatch Record!

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Check out the M&P 15-22 Sport

BY ED THOMAS
SPECIAL CONTRIBUTOR

A Winchester .22 long rifle was the first real rifle I ever fired as a child. I have owned many different rifles in that caliber in my time on this planet.

If I could have only one rifle, it would be chambered in the .22 long rifle cartridge. Most anything can be taken with it if need be and although not advertised as a defense round, I often carry one exactly for that reason and do not feel under gunned.

One can carry hundreds of rounds of ammunition in a pocket, and the cost will not damage your wallet nearly as much as the cost of center-fire cartridges.

I have always wanted a .22 long rifle in an AR-15 platform but have not found one I really like. I prefer less weight than all of them I have previously tried out. Some of the other .22 rifles look like an AR-15 but don't really work or function like an AR-15, so they are not really a proper training rifle for the AR rifle platform.

I recently got the chance to check out the new

S&W M&P 15-22 Sport. The gun is a lightweight, reinforced polymer .22 long rifle that has a 25-round magazine or an optional 10-round magazine.

The sights are Magpul folding sights adjustable for windage and elevation. It has a full-top picatinny rail so that any preference of optics can be attached.

The model I was shooting was in Kryptek Highlander Camo, but they come standard in black along with Muddy Girl Camo and other options available.

It has a six-position adjustable stock and fully functional charging handle. The threaded barrel with removable flash hider/muzzle brake allows one to use a suppressor on this rifle if desired.

This rifle weighs only 5 pounds, which makes it a perfect training rifle for kids and women. Once they have trained with this lightweight rifle, they will be able to operate any of the AR-15 variants in center-fire calibers as they work exactly the same – just heavier and with more recoil.

It has all the standard AR-15 operating buttons, safety and disassembles basically the same. The uppers and lowers are not interchangeable with

AR-15 rifles, but many of the same parts such as triggers, stocks and accessories can be used on the 15-22.

Accuracy seems on par with my other open-sight .22 rifles. I did not bench test the rifle for accuracy but was able to bounce cans and rocks out to 50 yards with the peep sights with no problem.

I have put around 500 rounds through this little rifle without any kind of hiccup. This is pretty amazing, considering I did not oil or clean this rifle since I wanted to see how it would perform right out of the box.

This would be a great little rifle to grab when the wolf or any other varmint is at the door. The suggested retail price is \$499.99 for the standard black model, but it can be found for less in the big-box stores or on sale.

I think this will be a fun rifle for all the kids in the family, young or old. I know the grandkids will love shooting this rifle if they can get it away from me.

ED THOMAS is a licensed falconer, trapper, hunter, shotgun instructor and fisherman lifelong outdoorsman who lives in Lampasas County. See his award-winning "Wild Ed's Texas Outdoors" blog at wildedtx.blogspot.com.

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The bond of a father and son in the woods

BY HUNTER KING
DISPATCH RECORD

My dad has taken me deer hunting from the time I was able to walk. As a kid, I would sit in the stand and watch and learn from everything he said and did.

Now, I don't remember all those times, but I am certain they have shaped the person and the hunter I am today.

This sentiment is true for so many people around the country and around the world.

Lampasas ISD Superintendent Dr. Chane Rascoe and his sons, Aden Rascoe and Ethan Rascoe, are another example of the father-child bond that can be formed.

"The fall of the year is a special time for our family, having been raised to hunt as a kid," Chane

Rascoe said. "I can remember my dad and brother waking me up early the first morning, like I did for my two boys what seems like just a few years ago.

"Aden (18) and Ethan (20) have long passed their first hunts, but those memories will last a lifetime for our family," he said. "I was in the stand with Ethan when he killed his first noteworthy buck. It walked out on a very cold morning, and Ethan had to lean across my side of the stand to rest his gun for a stable shot.

"Despite shaky nerves and an awkward position, he made a great shot, dropping the eight-point immediately."

Aden Rascoe's first deer story is a little different but still memorable, his father said.

"Aden's first buck came while he and I were scouting along the edge of a field," Rascoe said. "The little buck came out, and Aden leveled down to shoot, only to have the gun misfire. The buck ran off, only to return after grunting a couple times with a grunt call.

"The second shot proved to be successful and made for another memory that will last a timeline," the superintendent said.

"Since then, both my boys have killed many deer of vast sizes using both bows and rifles, but the excitement is the same as it always has been for us. There's nothing like being a hunter this time of year."

As I have gotten older, I have been able to look back and appreciate more and more everything my father has done to get me in the woods hunting and appreciating God's creation.

My dad is my best friend, in large part because of the time we have spent in the deer stand together. I also have been fortunate to take a world-class whitetail as well as several other great bucks because of the opportunities he has provided me.

I cannot wait to experience the same things my dad has experienced through the years with my future sons or daughters and to get more excited about their first four-point than I ever was about killing my own bucks.

Growing up in the woods kept me active, out of trouble and so much more. I'll forever be grateful for my hunting upbringing, and I encourage anyone to enjoy it themselves.

HUNTER KING is sports editor for the Lampasas Dispatch Record.



CHANE RASCOE | COURTESY PHOTOS



COURTESY PHOTO

When Hunter King was a young teenager, he killed this deer with his dad's rifle while they hunted together. "Without a doubt, this is a story I will tell my children one day," he said.

Brothers Aden Rascoe and Ethan Rascoe have hunted together with their father, Chane Rascoe, since the boys were very young. These photos show a couple of the first bucks the boys killed.



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Meat snack sticks to make at home

BY ED THOMAS
SPECIAL CONTRIBUTOR

I love meat snack sticks but don't eat them very often because of the price. If you figure out the price per ounce for decent ones, it comes in around \$20 per pound. Many of those I have bought taste greasy, and there is no way of knowing what is really in them.

Therefore, I have been working to come up with a meat stick recipe I can make at home for a reasonable price and with quality ingredients. The following is my best effort so far and can be made with your choice of meats.

I often use venison or wild hog. You can leave out or add spices as you please. I sometimes add cheese and jalapenos to the recipe.

I stuff the mixture into 17 to 21mm edible collagen snack stick casings, available at many butcher shops, online sausage supply companies, Amazon.com and many Academy Sports stores. I

use the mahogany-colored ones.

Come up with your own favorite recipe, but until you do I think you will enjoy this one.

MEAT SNACK STICKS

10 pounds of ground meat with about 20% to 25% fat (I like to use brisket trimmings or pork fat)

2 level tsp. pink cure salt
4 T. kosher salt
2 T. black pepper
1 T. crushed red pepper flakes
1 T. garlic powder
1 tsp. paprika
1 tsp. mustard powder
1 tsp. onion powder
2 tsp. brown sugar
½ cup powdered milk
1 tsp. liquid smoke
2 cups cold water

Mix all dry ingredients together very well. Add the liquid smoke to the 2 cups of cold water, and mix dry ingredients into the water until dissolved and mixed well. You can leave out the liquid

smoke if you are going to actually smoke the snack sticks. Since I do these in the oven, I add the liquid smoke.

Once well mixed, pour water with spices over the meat, and mix until the ingredients are equally distributed through the ground meat. Place meat mixture in the refrigerator, cover and let cool for 12 to 24 hours to let the cure work and the spices blend together.

After at least of 12 hours in the refrigerator, stuff into casings. Add more cold water if needed to help with stuffing the casings. Once the casings are stuffed, you can dry them in a smoker, oven or dehydrator.

Slowly dry to around 155 degrees internal temperature or to the dryness and hardness you prefer. If using poultry in your meat mix, bring to 165 degrees internal temperature for safety.

Cut to preferred length, package and enjoy.



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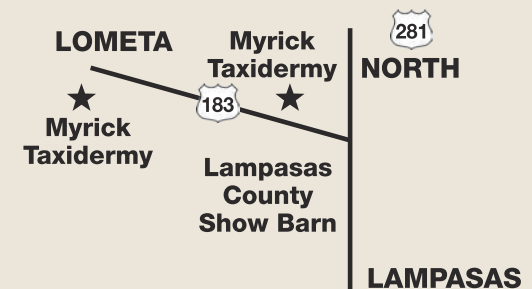


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Goodbye to a hunter: an old dog's final adventure

BY DAVID LOWE
DISPATCH RECORD

Over the years, our family's beagles, Baily and Sunny, have enjoyed many vigorous rabbit chases filled with feverish howls, frantic dashes through scratchy brush and seemingly endless circles along scent trails.

Our latest excursion was not that kind of hunt.

For the 14- and 12-year-old hounds, it felt much more like a senior shuffle than a youngster's race.

And that turned out just fine. In fact, the slow pace of that mid-September evening helped me reflect on the many outdoor outings we had enjoyed – and provided time to savor what proved to be Baily's final rabbit chase.

About a month later, our family said goodbye to the headstrong tan-and-white howler who had accompanied my wife and me throughout our whole marriage and who had played with each of our three children – now 10, 7 and 4 – as they grew. My wife is convinced that Baily, declining rapidly on her final day, clung to life specifically so her young companions could pet her one last time after school. It was an emotional moment, and it was not fun to see the sadness in our children's faces.

On the other hand, though, the end of one chapter has brought back memories of our many adventures (and misadventures) with Baily.

I can't pinpoint the date of our first rabbit hunt, but I do recall the satisfaction of seeing a dog indulge in one of its most primal, fulfilling instincts:



FILE PHOTO

Eva Lowe, now 10, follows her beagle Baily on a training run several years ago.

the thrill of the pursuit.

Baily had just about grown enough for the rest of her body to keep proportion with her floppy ears. When she tasted her first opportunity to sprint across acres and acres of open field, following the scent of a cottontail, it seemed as though she truly came alive. Her tail whipped frantically from side to side like a windshield wiper. Her nose trembled as she processed smells as rapidly as possible. And, oh, the howl!

Imagine the dense, operatic alto tones of a Viking heroine in a Wagner opera. That was the standard howl. Then, mix in a hyperactive wail (sort of a cross between a fire engine and a toddler moaning about being denied candy). That eruption came when Baily got closest to a cottontail and couldn't contain her excitement anymore.

Sunny's hoarse yips always contrasted with Baily's full, richer howl in a truly interesting way. Even though I didn't train Baily and Sunny much, and they didn't come from impressive bloodlines, it was such fun to hear the contrasting sounds of two beagles and to watch how they worked together. I can only imagine the pleasure of running a large pack of well-trained hounds.

Baily never managed to lead a cottontail into a convenient shooting lane, so I can't describe the satisfaction of harvesting a rabbit on a hunt with hounds. Nevertheless, even though Baily didn't help our family get meat, she gave us music. I believe the symphony of the hunt will stick in my memory for many years to come.

To be fully transparent, though, I have to say that some of Baily's escapades were just downright exasperating.

She chased deer, even when corrected sternly with an electronic collar.

She chased a skunk once – and only avoided getting sprayed because I scared the odiferous mammal away with a quick shot from a .22.

And several times, despite collar shocks that made her yelp and in spite of repeated shouts that threatened to make me lose my voice, she simply ran off and failed to return when it was time to head home. I don't know if she found hiding places deep within our family's property or if she pushed through barbed wire onto a neighbor's place. (If the latter, my sincere apologies.)

One of those disappearances lasted almost 24 hours – until my wife and our daughter, then just a toddler, drove the 15 miles to the family hunting grounds the next day and found Baily trudging along in the heat.

Another time, Sunny followed Baily's example



ALLYSSA LOWE | COURTESY PHOTO

Baily lived with the Lowe family for almost 14 years and enjoyed many outdoor outings.

when the two of them ran away while chasing whatever animal they had found. When we finally retrieved them, they faced their self-inflicted consequences. Baily was so exhausted that she barely moved for almost a day. Sunny must have run over sharp, rocky ground. His paw pads had been scraped so raw that my wife decided to dab them with antibiotic ointment and bandage them. I think the pain was worth it, though, for the two beagle buddies. If dogs could talk, I can only imagine the yarns they would have spun about the time they ran away together.

Ever the well-rounded hound, Baily made sure to misbehave just as much in town as out in the country.

She scaled the chain-link backyard fence at our former house.

She ate almost anything we forgot to secure in the refrigerator or the pantry – even if it meant having to climb until all four stocky legs stood

SEE FAITHFUL, PAGE 28



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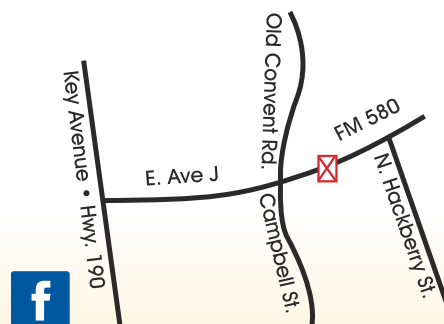
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- Black Forest Ham, Cream Cheese, Cajun Sausage, Jalapenos and a layer of Bacon over the top.

Bacon Wrapped Backstrap Steaks

\$1.00 each

Venison Fajitas

\$3.00 lb.

Bacon Burger *(add jalapeno for 25¢ lb. or cheese for 50¢ lb.)*

- Bulk Bacon Burger
- Bacon Burger Patties
- Deer Balls

\$3.00 lb.

\$3.80 lb.

99¢ each

Pan Sausage *(Hot or Mild)*

- Breakfast or Italian
- Maple Breakfast
- Bacon Breakfast
- Maple Bacon Breakfast

\$3.00 lb.

\$3.50 lb.

\$4.00 lb.

\$4.50 lb.

Breakfast Sizzlers

- Regular Breakfast Sizzlers
- Maple Breakfast Sizzlers
- Bacon Breakfast Sizzlers
- Maple Bacon Breakfast Sizzlers

\$4.00 lb.

\$4.50 lb.

\$5.00 lb.

\$5.50 lb.

Link Sausage *(Smoked or Fresh) (add jalapeno for 25¢ lb. or cheese for 50¢ lb.)*

- Bratwurst, Garlic, Cajun, Polish or Italian

\$4.00 lb.

Summer Sausage *(Hot or Mild)*

- Regular Summer Sausage
- Jalapeno Summer Sausage
- Cheese Summer Sausage
- Jalapeno and Cheese Summer Sausage

\$4.00 lb.

\$4.25 lb.

\$4.50 lb.

\$4.75 lb.

Snack Sticks *(Hot or Mild)*

- Regular Snack Sticks
- Jalapeno Snack Sticks
- Cheese Snack Sticks
- Jalapeno and Cheese Snack Sticks

\$6.00 lb.

\$6.25 lb.

\$6.50 lb.

\$6.75 lb.

Traditional Dry Sausage *(add jalapeno for 25¢ lb. or cheese for 50¢ lb.)*

\$4.00 lb.

Smoked Hot Links *(Hot or Really Hot)*

\$4.00 lb.

Jerky *(Precooked weight)*

\$6.00 lb.

- Pepper, Teriyaki, Southwest, Jalapeno, Garlic, Original, Ghost Pepper

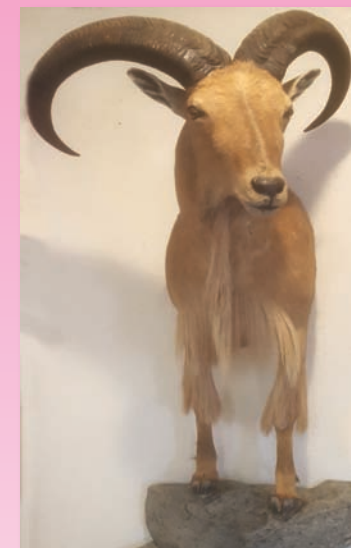
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Faithful companion provided plenty of dog memories for our family

FROM PAGE 24

atop our kitchen table.

Then, as if we didn't feed her enough, she often escaped to snack out of neighbors' garbage cans.

Our family remains grateful to Animal Control Officer Joe Schwartz, who at least once returned the runaway to our yard while we weren't home. He easily could have taken her to the animal shelter and made us post "bail" for our little miscreant. Instead, he chose neighborly public service.

I vividly remember riding back into town with long-time game warden Jim Lindeman after interviewing him for his retirement story. About two blocks from my house, I saw a familiar furry figure near an alley and had to ask Lindeman to stop. I felt my face turn the color of a ripe summer tomato as I confessed, "Oh, man, that's my dog. Sorry, can I stop and catch her?"

Perhaps the most frustrating experience at the time – but one of our family's funniest dog memories now – was during Baily's puppyhood. My wife came home from work and heard a faint hissing sound coming from the guest bathroom. She opened the door to find a geyser spewing from the hose that ran from the toilet to the wall. Several inches of water covered the

bathroom floor, and Baily's plastic food dish floated atop the waters like a miniature Noah's ark.

Baily shivered in her beloved chair – perhaps a bit sheepish but undoubtedly secretly happy she had given her puppy teeth a good sharpening. She probably also enjoyed hearing my wife run a hastily rented carpet shampooer in the adjacent hallway, trying to mend the damage before our supper guests arrived. (The guests were my parents, and Allysse was a fairly new bride, so the self-imposed pressure to impress compounded her irritation with Baily.)

Despite the occasional headaches, though, it was hard to stay angry with Baily for too long.

She enhanced all three of our children's love for animals. She was there to give loving but smelly kisses (what had she been eating?) when the little ones felt sad. She entertained us by chasing after tennis balls in the yard, scaring stray cats off the lawn and frolicking with us on the rare Lampasas snow days.

She was the first dog Allysse and I had together, and the first one we lost. And, despite creaky joints, a weak back and breathing trouble near the end of her life, she pushed herself to the end, enjoying walks in town and intriguing scent trails on the family place in the country.

The final time she joined Sunny and me on a walk

through the woods, we came within about 15 yards of a cottontail. A younger Baily would have picked up the scent much sooner and darted off like a flash. This time – with nose, ears and eyesight failing – she didn't notice the rabbit even when it ran away from us. I finally nudged Baily to the exact spot where the rabbit had been sitting, and then my old hunting companion eventually picked up the smell of game.

She followed the trail, but not for long. She faintly whimpered with excitement, but this time, she couldn't manage the blasting, operatic howls she had belted out in years past. I think she actually got a bit lost in a cedar thicket. When she couldn't find her way back to Sunny and me, we listened for the tinkling of the small metal tag on her collar, and we retrieved her.

It was far from our most glorious hunt. But it ended the same way many of our best memories had – with a pinkish sunset over a rolling Hill Country landscape, with exercise that did us all a heap of good, and with a little bit of scratching on Baily's thick coat. That coat had a lot more white hairs in it than it used to – but then again, the same probably is true of my beard.

It was a fitting finale for a faithful companion.

DAVID LOWE is publisher of the Lampasas Dispatch Record.



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5. Use the correct ammunition.
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The stranger at the fire: Had he come for me?

BY ED THOMAS
SPECIAL CONTRIBUTOR

This is a true story, as I believe it, that I have related to only a few people. It relates to a strange and haunting event that drifts into my consciousness every once in a while.

I recently saw the haunting visitor again in my mind's eye. By telling the story, I am hopeful the stranger will quit sneaking into my dreams.

I do not believe in ghosts that walk the earth, but I know strange things occur. I also am aware that the Bible speaks of spirits and demons. The following is my story as best I can relate it.

Many years ago, my brother by choice, Ken, called and told me his family company was purchasing a ranch to hold as an investment. The ranch was located in far North Texas in the remote Caprock Canyon brush country.

The place was supposed to have deer and hogs on it, and Ken wanted to know if I would like to go up and spend the weekend. He planned to explore the ranch and possibly do some hunting.

I was told the ranch had an old cabin we could stay in while there. I always do the cooking on these trips, so I began to get the supplies together that we would need for a weekend.

I picked up some nice steaks along with some baking potatoes for the first night. There is nothing quite like a good steak grilled over mesquite coals when you are on a hunting trip.

I drove from Austin to Abilene to meet up with Ken. We loaded his four-wheel-drive truck and started the long trek north. It was almost dark when we arrived at the ranch gate, and we saw no game as we drove to the cabin.

We quickly unloaded the truck, and each of us threw our sleeping bags on a bunk in separate rooms of the cabin. I then gathered some dry mesquite and started a fire in a stone fire ring out back of the cabin.

I placed the grill I had brought over the fire and wrapped the potatoes in foil to bake while the fire burned down to coals. After a great steak, we enjoyed the warmth of the fire and the company of a good friend until we decided to turn in for the night.

It had been a long day, and the warmth of a sleeping bag to ward off the North Texas chill was welcomed. The moaning and creaking of a windmill just outside my window made it difficult to go to sleep, but exhaustion got the better of me and I finally nodded off.

I awoke to notice the flickering of the fire reflecting off the walls of my room. I sat up on the edge of my bunk and looked out the window and noticed that someone had put more wood on the fire,



METRO CREATIVE SERVICES | COURTESY PHOTO

The figure stood in a western duster with the collar pulled up to block the cold wind. Ed Thomas says he never found anything that pointed to who or what was standing there that night.

and the flames were swirling in the wind. Smoke was rising against the cold, filling my view with eerie white clouds in the freezing night air.

At the edge of the illumination but close enough to take in the warmth of the fire stood a figure dressed in a western duster with the collar pulled up to block the cold wind. A familiar silver-belly hat was pulled down over his face so that I could not make out the eyes. His hands encased in golden buckskin gloves held a steaming cup of coffee against his chest, as if he was savoring the smell as much as the taste.

My first thought was to get dressed and go have a cup of coffee with my buddy, but thinking that my snoring might have driven him out into the cold I decided to let him enjoy the fire and his thoughts without my company. Besides, the coffee would keep me up the rest of the night.

As I climbed back into the warm sleeping bag, it felt like the right choice.

When I woke again, there was a pinkish-golden glow in the sky to the east. I walked to the front door and went out on the porch. The pre-dawn sky revealed an unbelievable scene with stars visible that I had not seen in a long time.

Frost covered the ground and brush, while my

bare skin tingled with shock as I stood against the cold wind and looked at the sky. It never ceases to amaze me how visible the stars are when you get out in a remote area where the sky is dark with no lights from the city.

I returned to the cabin to get dressed for the day. I lit the propane stove to make coffee and prepare breakfast.

Once the coffee was made, and eggs and sausage were cooked, I hollered at Ken to get up for breakfast as I took the biscuits from the oven.

After his brief morning ritual, Ken came to the table and asked how I had slept. Feeling guilty about driving him from his bunk with my snoring, I immediately started apologizing for waking him up in the middle of the night.

He looked at me with a strange look on his face and replied that his head never left the pillow until he woke just a few minutes before. I replied with the fact that I had seen him standing out by the fire in the middle of the night. Seeing that I was getting upset, he again assured me he had not moved from his sleeping bag all night.

I hurried outside to the fire pit, where the fire still burned in the early dawn. No one was around, and I could find no evidence of anyone having come or

Haunting figure still enters my dreams

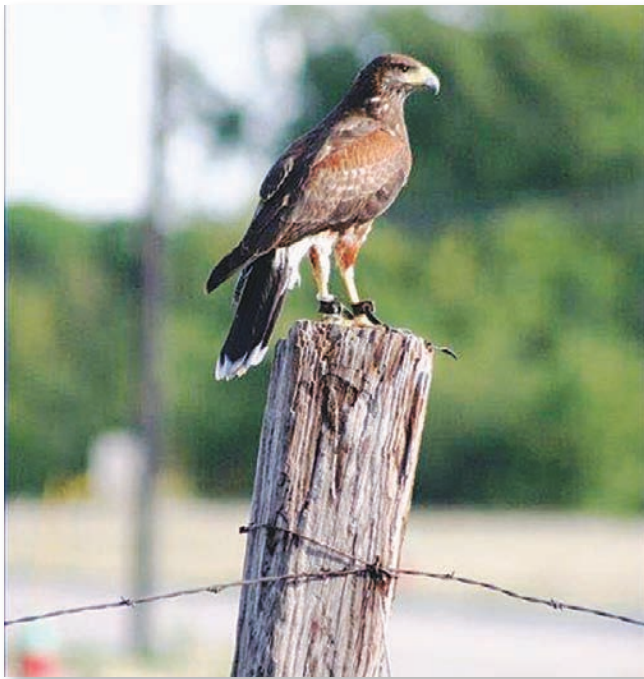
gone, other than the fact that the fire had not yet burned down to coals.

We were miles from anywhere and surely would have heard any vehicle driving onto the ranch. Anyone coming in on the road also would have had to get through a locked gate.

The cowboy I had seen at the fire was dressed in period western clothing, but that is the usual garb for Ken or me when we are not on a hunt where camouflage clothing is needed. Both of us were wearing silver-belly old-style cowboy hats on this trip, and either of our coats would pass for the one worn by the stranger at the fire.

I never found anything that pointed to who or what was standing at the fire that night. I will always wonder if he was sent for me, and something kept me from going out to the fire that night. I can think of a lot worse things that could come in the night. Peaceful dreams!

ED THOMAS is a licensed falconer, trapper, hunter, shotgun instructor and fisherman who lives in Lampasas County. See his award-winning "Wild Ed's Texas Outdoors" blog at wildedtx.blogspot.com.



ED THOMAS | COURTESY PHOTOS

Beauty lies in the land and the animals

Many who hunt in the fall appreciate the rolling Hill Country landscape, as well as its varied animal species that can be observed through a camera lens.

Hunting predators with a shotgun takes some technique

BY ED THOMAS
SPECIAL CONTRIBUTOR

The Johnny Stewart Grey Fox Pup in Distress tape echoed across the pasture in the cold night air. A pair of eerie bouncing eyes came out of a cedar thicket and started cutting across the edge of a grassy cactus flat to the downwind side of the truck.

I kept the eyes just inside the lower glow of the red beam of light and asked my calling partner if he was ready. I heard a faint guttural “drop it,” which told me to drop the beam on the grey fox to illuminate it for the shot.

I dropped the beam full on the fox at about 40 yards and was amazed to see dust from the truck kick up under and behind the bouncing fox.

The second shot rolled the grey but was still too far back, and the animal had to be subdued when we ran out to pick it up.

I have seen this happen too many times before and have come to realize that many hunters are not prepared to hunt predators with shotguns. Hunting after dark or in low light conditions just multiplies the problems of hitting your target with a shotgun.

My calling partner that night was an experienced hunter. He is not a bad wing shot when we go bird hunting, yet the fox he had problems hitting was much larger than a dove, and it almost got away. I would bet that in a year of hunting, he takes only a few shots at night with a shotgun in the type of situation in which he shot the fox.

Some of us use a shotgun for predators much more than that, but few practice to be an effective predator shotgunner.

THE DIFFICULTY OF PREDATOR HUNTING

There are tons of articles out there that will help you pick shotguns, chokes, shells and shot sizes to use for predator hunting with a shotgun. Just like anyone else I have my favorites, but it is not my goal to convince you to use the same equipment as me.

All sorts of companies market special predator ammo and chokes for shotguns; most are excellent. We are even seeing special models of shotguns marketed for the predator hunter. Many of these products are as good as it gets, but none will work if you cannot hit your target.

I want to enable you to hit your target at any reasonable range, in the brush, in the dark, with minimal light or in other adverse conditions.

Most predator hunters shoot shotguns with magnum loads and very tight choke patterns with large sizes of shot. This fact alone makes shooting the shotgun much more difficult in predator hunting than shooting birds on the wing with open chokes and large dense patterns.

Have you ever wondered why many turkey hunters use scopes and special sights on specialized shotguns for hunting turkey? They do that because it is very easy to miss a turkey's head with such

tight chokes and the dense patterns they shoot.

The same is true of predator hunting, yet we shoot in conditions where the shot must be made instinctively without time to take careful aim, often in poor light and without special sighting systems. Our targets are not slowly strutting around a decoy but often are running full out, bouncing and turning at every step.

If you can miss a strutting turkey at 40 yards, imagine how much easier it would be to miss a fox or the coyote's vital kill area on the run at 40 yards. This is further complicated by the fact that most predators are moving much faster than their gait appears to propel them across the ground.

IT TAKES PRACTICE

Very few of us go out and practice shooting clay birds with a super full choke, yet that is exactly

what kind of practice is needed to become deadly on predators.

The sporting clays shooters have a perfect target for practicing predator shooting. It is a super-tough hard clay target called the rabbit that is thrown from a high-powered trap along the ground at speeds up to 50 miles an hour.

If you have a sporting clays range near you, go out and get them to let you practice shooting rabbits with your predator hunting shotgun. I always get strange looks for shooting a camo shotgun with a strap and a 22-inch barrel on the sporting clays course, but I can hit predators on the run better than most because of such practice.

One can learn more while spending an hour shooting bouncing clay rabbits than in years of shooting running targets while hunting. It will open your eyes and make you a better hunter.



ED THOMAS | COURTESY PHOTO

A grey fox is a common predator around Lampasas and the surrounding areas. They are easily identified by their color and the large poofy tail.

When hunting predators at night, focus only on the eyes

SET UP YOUR TARGET

In order to become a good predator shotgunner, the first thing you must do is establish that your shotgun shoots where you look.

Draw a three-inch bull's-eye on a large piece of cardboard, and place about 15 steps away.

Put in a tight choke, and quickly shoot several shots without taking careful aim by simply mounting the gun and shooting while keeping your eyes focused only on the bull's-eye. Again, focus only on the bull's-eye; do not look at the front bead on the shotgun.

The shotgun's front bead should be visible only in your peripheral vision. Do not readjust the gun position to line up the bead, or this exercise will not tell you where your shotgun shoots.

The goal of this test is to find out where your shotgun prints the center of the pattern when you don't have the time to take a bead or adjust your hold. After four or five shots you should begin to see where the center of your pattern is striking on the cardboard.

If after shooting the center of your pattern is not mostly on the bull or just to the top of the bull, you will need to adjust your shotgun until it shoots to the center or just a tad high. Many shotguns have shims in the stock to make these adjustments. Just follow the manufacturer's instructions to adjust the stock.

I won't go into shotgun fit here as it would take another article to cover it, but you will never shoot well instinctively unless your shotgun fits you. With a shotgun that shoots where you look, you will only need to see your target to hit it. You will also become much more efficient at night shooting and those shots where you only have a moment to fire.

The next thing you need to do is learn an efficient method of shooting and practice until it becomes a habit.

The method I use is called Pull Away or Move, Mount, Shoot. What this means is you will swing the shotgun along with your target at the same speed as the target in the ready position, but not mounted to the shoulder.

When the target is in position to shoot, you simply mount the shotgun on the front of the target, pull away or out in front of the target, and fire. The gun should go off only a heartbeat after touching your cheek.

At night you focus only on the animal's eyes, not the whole animal and not the fluffy tail of a fox or coyote.

In daylight or under good lighting conditions, focus only on the head of the animal so that if it is running you can simply go to the front, pull away and drop your quarry. You must concentrate your focus on the head of the animal, as it is easy to look at the whole animal and not the head.

Remember, the goal of shooting moving targets is to shoot where the target will be when the shot gets there. Unless the target is standing still, you will have to lead your quarry, thus the pull away or pull

to the front to fire.

If your shotgun fits or you have adjusted the stock to fit, you will not have to worry about shooting over or under the animal or where your front bead is at the moment of firing. Everything will be where it is supposed to be, and you will not be wondering why you missed or end up trying to track a wounded animal at night.

WHEN IT ALL WORKS

I have seen a hunter stand in the back of a truck, with marginal lighting, engage multiple running coyotes busting into a brush clearing and make a kill with each shot of the shotgun while a screaming predator call was blaring in his ears the whole time. We have all had those moments when everything works just like it is supposed to work. It just seems to happen a whole lot more when your shotgun shoots where you look, and you have practiced sufficiently to be able to shoot well when those special opportunities come around.

A good predator shotgunner is an amazing thing to watch, and it is a very efficient way to take predators. With a little practice, it may become your favorite way to hunt.

ED THOMAS is a licensed falconer, trapper, hunter, shotgun instructor and fisherman who lives in Lampasas County. See his award-winning "Wild Ed's Texas Outdoors" blog at wildedtx.blogspot.com.



TEXAS PARKS & WILDLIFE DEPARTMENT | COURTESY PHOTO

The coyote could be the first animal a hunter calls in if spotlighting predators at night. Lots of deer hunters are not fond of coyotes because they can kill fawns and harm the deer population.



TEXAS PARKS & WILDLIFE DEPARTMENT | COURTESY PHOTO

Mountain lions are a rare sighting around Lampasas, but they are one of the dominant predators in the state of Texas.

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Moose hunting in Alaska turns into a different kind of adventure

BY JED DUNNING
SPECIAL CONTRIBUTOR

I wish to share my experience of moose hunting near my home in Alaska.

My adventure might be more accurately described as stumbling around in a massive forest, carrying a heavy backpack and rifle while wondering what to do next. I must admit I have never harvested a moose during a sporting endeavor. I also confess knowing very little about moose habits and behavior.

My only moose kill was years ago while traveling with my family. I bagged a moose calf with a 33-foot Winnebago motor home. The Alaska state trooper promised to donate the young moose to the next person on the list.

Roadkill and other salvageable game animals are given to those who sign up for such and wait their turn. Annually, there usually are around 240 moose killed on roads of the Kenai Peninsula.

I live on a small parcel of land on this peninsula that juts into a very large sanctuary called the Kenai National Wildlife Refuge. The area was set aside by the state and originally was called Kenai Moose Range. The intent was to provide habitat for moose and native game animals. This allotment is 1.92 million acres!

The distance from my house to the boundary of the preserve is about 50 yards.

After casual study of moose hunting and moose behavior, I decided to invest legitimate time and effort in pursuit of a bull moose. I had what I felt was sufficient gear to tackle the project and had at least been an important member of a crew that dismantled and packed out a few fresh killed moose.

If you have just killed an immense animal in remote country and happen to be friends with an old meatcutter who has operated a wild-game processing facility and taxidermy shop for decades, call him! Word has gotten around that I am handy to have as a member of the packing crew!

HUNTING RESTRICTIONS

An adult bull moose is going to weigh around 1,200 pounds. I forgot to mention earlier that no vehicles are allowed in the area I planned to hunt, and I planned to hunt alone. These obstacles guarantee that competition from other hunters will be light. Getting a harvested animal out would require much effort.

This was my fourth moose season since moving to Alaska. So far, my effort expended in moose hunting had been purchasing licenses, passing a simple test that established me as a hunter who knew the



GOOGLE PHOTO

This moose is the type of animal Jed Dunning planned to take. In Alaska, it is legal to harvest a male with at least a 50-inch spread, or the rack must have three or more brow tines on one side.

rules and expectations, then waiting and hoping that a moose walked by my house as I gazed out the window drinking coffee. They do pass by my house but not often during moose season.

The requirements that must be met before a moose is legal for harvest are that it must be a male, its rack must have at least a 50-inch spread, or the rack must have three or more brow tines on one side. Another exception is called a "spike fork," which is a bull with at least one unbranched antler.

I have spent considerable time tramping through the forest near my house, and rarely have I encountered a moose. A friend of mine recently retired from a career working for Kenai Refuge. He is a very experienced hunter and has studied moose and their habits for many years. I talk to him frequently and try to learn as much as I can about game animals native to Alaska. I consider him an expert. Much of what I believe about moose behavior has been shared by him and is a reflection of his many years of actual observation.

STRATEGY INVOLVED IN THE HUNT

Moose season runs Sept. 1-25.
The most productive method of finding a bull



GOOGLE MAPS

Dunning lives on a parcel of land on the Kenai Peninsula that juts into the Kenai National Wildlife Refuge.

Killing moose would take huge effort to get him back home

moose is thought to be in utilizing the technique of “calling.” Calling a moose involves imitating vocalizations of moose and noises made by rutting bulls as they fight or mock fight brush, trees and shrubbery.

The most productive part of the season for this technique is the last five to 10 days of season.

My plan was to spend as much time as possible in the forest looking for moose and moose habitat, then if I had not connected with a moose, I would spend the last few days trying to call one up. Although I was willing to give it a try, I had little confidence in my ability to imitate the vocals of a moose but had plans to attempt it.

The information I had gathered thus far convinced me my time would be most productive if spent hunting near the Moose River, which is about two miles north of my home. There are no roads through the forest, other than game trails that follow erratic, unpredictable paths.

Navigating in the spruce forest is very difficult. Once you enter, it is imperative you have a compass, GPS or other device to prevent becoming disoriented (lost) or confused. While in the forest, you have no distant landmarks to key upon, and it is unbelievably easy to check your compass and discover you are headed in the wrong direction.

The spruce forest is literally a jungle of fallen trees and tangles. It is wise to mark your trail as you go, but of course you should remove any artificial markers such as surveyor ribbons when you exit.

When I finally established a path to the river that I could follow, it took me through marshes and mudholes then hills and hurdles, up, down and around. A trip in and out was four tough miles and required three hours to complete, even after several trips spent improving the route.

Although I technically was hunting, I really was preparing to spend the late part of the season camped near the best moose habitat I could find.

PREPPING A CAMPSITE

I had established a location and was bringing in gear to outfit a simple campsite that would allow me to spend my time hunting when animals were active, and reduce the time

and energy-draining process of traveling back and forth daily. I was out in the forest almost every day.

During September, our seasons were changing, and it rained – at least some – every day. Since I was planning to kill a moose, I anticipated the huge effort needed to get him home. Believe me, this would be a big project.

I dragged a plastic ice fishing sled loaded with gear to a site I had chosen for a hunting camp. I cached my gear at the site near where I planned to hunt. My sled drags easily over snow and ice. It did not drag easily over tundra moss, sticks, stumps, logs or debris! I worked myself to exhaustion making that trip.

When on location, I piled my gear, covered it with the inverted sled, and it became my supply cache. Later when I came to hunt, I would pack in more gear with the plan to be fully outfitted before the expected peak of the season.

As I hunted and scouted for moose, I was happy to find a really nice moose antler that had been shed. I also found a big caribou antler. I was convinced I had improved my chances by finding an area where at least one big moose had been!

I also had found bear scat on trails and was puzzled by the composition of one specimen. In the fall, bear droppings look similar to a cow patty filled with undigested cranberries and/or blueberries. Often it is evident that salmon were on the menu. The sample I was curious about was much different, and I had no reasonable guess as to what that bear had consumed.

The area where I live has a healthy population of black bears and brown (coastal grizzly) bears. The size of the scat piles had me thinking big bear. Exciting!

The next day when I hiked in to hunt, I discovered my supply cache had been raided by a bear, and my gear was scattered. A few things were damaged, and my sled had been perforated enough to identify the culprit as a big animal. The teeth punctures were bigger than any



COURTESY PHOTO

Jed Dunning is pictured with Mr. Bruin – not quite the moose he originally had intended to bring home. Dunning used the lean meat to make sausages, steaks, jerky, stew meat and ground meat products, just as he does with venison.

black bear could have made.

I now had two trail cameras monitoring game trails in the area. I retrieved one and put it on the trail near my cache.

The gear that had been most interesting to the bear was then hung in trees. Since there was no food stored, I really didn't expect another visit, but I wasn't sure about that.

Later as I was hunting, I stumbled onto a ground-dwelling hornet's nest that had been dug out very recently by a bear. The hornets were swarming and agitated. The nest

appeared to be freshly disturbed. The bear had been eating thousands of larvae. This answered the puzzle about what the unidentified bear droppings were composed of.

My other game camera was on a moose trail nearby, and it had photographed a big bear passing earlier that morning. I had a grizzly tag in my pack and was really interested in this new development.

Later that day I found three different spruce trees that had been used by bears to rub their backs. Long

Packing the meat out took several round trips

FROM PAGE 37

brown hairs were stuck in the spruce resin. My thoughts were now dominated by visions of big bears.

I returned the next day to find my gear stash had been visited by Mr. Bear again. There was little damage to the goods, but now I was having second thoughts about camping right in this bruin's backyard.

The nearby camera had no picture of him, so I didn't have evidence of where he approached from or when.

A BEAR AT THE CAMP

That evening I backed off as far as the forest would allow and watched until dark. Nothing came by, but my camera showed the bear visited about two hours after I had left.

The same thing happened again the next evening.

A few days later I decided to hunt the area near the hornet nest, thinking I should get closer to the river where I suspected the bear was coming from. My camera had documented daytime activity, so I abandoned watching the camp and set up watching a trail down near the river.

Just before dark a bear stepped out of the trees at about 20 yards and looked away from me, raised his head and tested the wind. He then faced me, lowered his head to the trail and checked something with his nose or maybe foraged a berry. He looked as big as a bulldozer!

I eased up my rifle, released the safety and tightened my finger against the trigger. The cover I was hunting was very thick and surrounded by wet, marshy areas that would make tracking or processing an animal very difficult. Hunting dangerous game poses a different set of problems -- especially when hunting solo. By the way, nobody else knew where I was set up.

I normally hunt with archery equipment and have harvested four nice black bears without problem. I had decided a heavy rifle was a far better choice for this situation.

I was hoping to drop the bear in his tracks, so I armed myself with a classic Winchester Model 70 chambered for 375 H&H Magnum. I loaded it with vintage ammo that was armed with 300-grain Winchester Silvertip bullets. After a smooth squeeze, the trigger did its job, released the firing pin, and the bullet was sent down the barrel and on its way.

The bear collapsed. I watched it for a minute or two, then approached carefully. He was a nice mature male with a big head, long claws and a beautiful thick coat.

The shot was made only minutes before it would have been too dark to shoot.

THE TREK BACK HOME

After tagging and field-dressing the bear, I trudged through the forest back to my home to rest up and await the sun's return.

The following morning I returned to find things just as I had left them. After a quick photo session, I skinned, quartered and began packing my bear home. It was the start of a very long day.

Luckily, the overnight temperature had dropped into the mid-30s with daytime temperatures expected to reach into the 40s.

I moved the meat about half a mile, hoping bears or wolves would not scavenge it. I fashioned a meat pole and hung it up to cool. I then dragged the skull and hide home in the bear-damaged sled. This was by far the toughest trip of the packout. It took me four hours to cover the two-mile trip.

Starting the next morning, I began the task of three round trips packing meat out. After transporting the boned-out meat home and packing it in ice, I was ready to stabilize the hide and skull.

After removing the skull from the hide, I placed it into a freezer. I then fleshed and salted my hide and prepared it for the tanning process. I will make a bearskin rug with mounted head for my home and

preserve the skull as an additional trophy.

Bear meat is very similar to venison. I remove all the fat and sinewy portions, and use the lean muscle to make sausages, jerky, steaks, stew meat and ground meat products just as I do with deer. Grizzly bear, it's what's for dinner!

By the time I finished the unplanned bear project -- which included retrieval of camping gear -- moose season was down to its final day. My urge to hunt had been satisfied. I needed a nap more than I needed a moose.

My efforts produced a fine trophy, meat in the freezer, many memories, increased knowledge and verification that I am just not a very good moose hunter. I plan to continue to study moose and their habits with hopes to try again next year. For me, the struggle enriches the reward.

JED DUNNING owns a deer processing and taxidermy shop in Lampasas. He also is a veteran hunting guide who enjoys writing about his adventures.



GOOGLE PHOTO

The Kenai Peninsula juts from the south-central coast of Alaska. The Kenai National Wildlife Refuge encompasses nearly 2 million acres. Its river is famous for the salmon population.

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Techniques for nighttime calling in Texas

BY ED THOMAS
SPECIAL CONTRIBUTOR

There was very little moon, and it was a somewhat cloudy, misty type of night. The darkness settled in on the two of us standing in the back of my truck. We stood motionless and quiet for several minutes to let the sounds of us driving to the spot and climbing into the truck bed settle into the night.

I set my E caller on top of the truck cab, chambered a round and laid my shotgun beside it. My partner quietly bolted a cartridge into the chamber of his rifle to be ready for the shot we hoped would come.

I picked up the red lens Q beam and turned it on to make a sweep of the area before pushing the play button on the caller. The panic-stricken scream of a cottontail rabbit rang out in the darkness as I scanned 360 degrees around the truck, watching for those shining eyes that would let me know a predator was coming to the call.

From a distant oak mott came the unmistakable bouncing eyes of a Texas grey fox. It was heading directly downwind to try and get the scent of whatever was involved in making the rabbit scream.

I reached for the shotgun and at about 35 yards I pulled the trigger, dropping the fox with a load of #4 buckshot.

I immediately pumped the shotgun, putting a new shell in the chamber, and kept scanning with the red beam.

About three minutes later, I picked up eyes around 150 yards out on the other side of a prickly pear cactus flat. It was a coyote, and he was headed downwind. I knew when he got our wind the game would be over, and he would disappear into the night.

I lip-squeaked to make sure my partner was on the coyote with the rifle and made a loud woof sound. The coyote stopped frozen in time, looking directly at us, and instantly it dropped to the ground as the .223 bullet hit home.

We continued to call for another five minutes before giving up on this location. We picked up the fox and coyote, unloaded the guns, climbed back in the cab of the truck and headed for our next location to call.

THE SUSPENSE OF CALLING

I started calling out of a vehicle at night about 45 years ago with my uncles, dad and grandfather in the Texas Hill County. I have repeated calling scenarios similar to the preceding one thousands of times. The thrill and suspense of what is going to come to the call is still just as strong today. When it is no longer there, I guess I will have to do something else, but I am not too worried about that.

The great thing about night calling in Texas is you never know what kind of critter may show up. I have called the typical coyotes, bobcat and fox along

with javelina, feral hogs, raccoons, ringtails, feral cats, deer, hawks, owls and dogs.

I am still hoping that someday those eyes coming in will be a mountain lion, as the Texas population is increasing.

Most Texas callers hunt pretty much the same style – out of trucks or special hunting vehicles with spotlights. Some have elaborate platforms or shooting chairs for the truck. I, too, would love to someday have one, but for now I just stand in the back of my truck or sometimes on a tool box and use the top of the cab as a table for my E caller, rifle, shotgun and light.

Even when calling by myself, I have a rifle and shotgun handy, as you never know what will come and how close or fast it will come in to the call.

I prefer a red lens spotlight, but others use white, green or blue. I like the red, as it does not light up my truck or shooting partners like the white light does.

MY TECHNIQUE

The technique is simple. I drive to my calling locations and sit tight for a few minutes to let things settle down. I then call with either a hand or E caller and scan for eyes. I do not turn the light off and on but leave it on the entire time I am calling and scanning all around the truck with the light.

I allow about 15 to 20 minutes for calling at a location. If nothing comes in that amount of time, I drive to the next location and call again. This allows me to cover a lot of country in a short time and have



SHARON NEWSOM | COURTESY PHOTO

Those who spend time night-calling predators will almost certainly run into coyotes, bobcats and fox.

Before spotlighting, let game warden know your plans

more chances of success.

Some of the key things for me are changing sounds if nothing comes in during the first five minutes.

Scan 360 degrees around the truck, as animals can and do come from any direction. Once a predator is spotted, keep the direct beam out of the animal's eyes until you are ready to shoot.

Develop a signal between partners to let each other know when a predator is spotted or you are ready to shoot. I just lip-squeak to let my partner know I have spotted eyes. Be ready to bark, woof or lip-squeak to stop the animal for the shot.

The one technique that has really helped me to pick up animals is to keep calling after shooting another animal. I have discovered that many times another coyote, a bobcat or a fox will come in to the call even though I shot just a minute or two before. I have had three fox come in less than two minutes total time and act like they did not even hear the other shots.

If I kill something, I usually call for at least five minutes more just in case.

My success rate on bobcats is much better at

night, and I believe it is because I see more of the cats at night. A cat can be in the brush or just stalking behind every piece of cover and in the daytime, I just sometimes don't see them. At night, the one thing a cat cannot hide is those big shining eyes.

One of the most important things at night is after you cut the truck off, BE QUIET! Don't slam doors or kick things around in the truck bed getting ready to call.

When I have everything ready to start a set, I still stand motionless and quiet in the back of the truck for several minutes just to let the area settle before calling.

CHECK OUT THESE DVDS

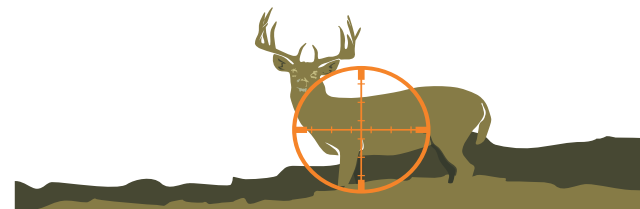
If you want to see how hunters in Texas hunt at night, there are some great DVDs with Texas-style night predator hunting.

There are two I really like and recommend. I don't have any connections to these boys, but they did good work, and I think you will enjoy their DVDs. The first is "Hunting the Night Shift," and the next is "The Ultimate Predator, Rulers of the Night."

Always make sure night spotlighting for predators is legal in your area. It is also good to let landowners and the local game warden know you will be out predator calling with a light.

I have been stopped by game wardens many times who would much rather have been at home asleep than checking on someone spotlighting who was doing everything legally. Of course, don't be surprised if the game warden stops by just to see how you did.

ED THOMAS is a licensed falconer, trapper, hunter, shotgun instructor and fisherman who lives in Lampasas County. See his award-winning "Wild Ed's Texas Outdoors" blog at wildedtx.blogspot.com.



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Venison Taco Pie

SUBMITTED BY CATHY TOWER

1 1/2 to 2 lbs. ground venison
(or ground beef)
1 can (10 1/2 oz.) red enchilada sauce
(mild or hot)
1 can (10 1/2 oz.) cream of mushroom
soup
1 large onion, chopped
11 oz. package of Fritos
1 cup grated cheese
1 cup broth
(chicken or beef)

Brown meat in a non-stick skillet over medium heat. (Add a small amount of cooking oil if you are using ground venison.) Season with salt, pepper and garlic to taste.

Remove from heat. Add the enchilada sauce, soup and onion, and combine.

Grease a 9x13-inch baking pan, then line with three-fourths of the Fritos.

Pour the meat and soup mixture over the Fritos. Sprinkle with remaining chips, then the cheese. Pour broth over the entire mixture. Bake, uncovered, for 30 minutes at 350°.

Venison Breakfast Eggs

SUBMITTED BY CATHY TOWER

8 eggs, slightly beaten
6 slices bread, cubed and broken
1 cup grated cheese
1 lb. venison breakfast sausage, cooked and well-drained
2 cups milk
1 tsp. salt
1 tsp. dry mustard
1 small can chopped green chiles

Mix ingredients. Pour into a greased 13x9-inch pan. Place in refrigerator overnight.

Next day: bake, uncovered, at 350° for 35 minutes. Let stand at room temperature for a few minutes. Cut into squares.



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Distinguishing ducks by sight, sound and taste

EDITOR'S NOTE: Retired dentist and avid duck hunter Neal Leavell provided this information several years ago. We think hunters will enjoy a refresher on identifying species that can be spotted in the area.

Duck species can be identified by their appearance, sounds and, to some extent, by the habitat they prefer. Local duck expert Neal Leavell said the "first step is knowing what ducks you're most likely to see in the area, so you've kind of got a smaller multiple choice."

In the area surrounding Lampasas, the most common species are widgeon, gadwall, green-wing teal, ringnecks, shovelers, pintails and redheads.

Wood ducks are the only wild duck species that commonly nests in this area during the hunting off-season.

Leavell said wood ducks rarely fly in to decoys on large, open bodies of water, but he sees them every year while deer hunting on his creek near Pearl.

Other species occasionally pass through the area but are not as common.

"We probably kill one mallard every two years," Leavell said. "Canvasbacks, we have a few of those. We have a few mergansers. We have a few scaup."

Ducks fall into two basic groups: puddle ducks and divers. Puddle ducks have long wings, land and take off more vertically, and don't dive underwater much. Divers seem to fly faster, Leavell explained. Diver ducks generally prefer larger, open bodies of water.

The most important reason to tell the difference in

duck species is to avoid violating bag limits, which vary by species.

The daily bag limit is six ducks. This can include no more than five mallards (only two may be hens), three wood ducks, two redheads, two canvasback, one scaup, one pintail and one "dusky" duck. (Mottled duck, Mexican-like duck, black duck and their hybrids are closed the first five days of the season in each zone.) Other species not listed have a bag limit of six.

The bag limit for mergansers is five, which may include no more than two hooded mergansers.

Pintail drakes have long, pointy tails and pointy wings. Pintail hens -- like hens of many species -- have more of a drab, brown color. They have a skinny profile.

Widgeons make a distinctive whistle sound. Teal make more of a peep sound, as do pintails.

"Mallards are by far the most vocal ducks ...," Leavell said. "Gadwalls can call pretty much, too."

There also is a noticeable difference in taste between species.

"Ringnecks are a duck that we kill that's not very good, and I make a soup out of them," Leavell said. "... When I eat them, I think of it probably being penance for having killed 'em."

The fishy taste of some diving ducks can be managed with "a good-tasting soup, just something to cover up the taste of them," Leavell said.

"Notoriously, the worst ones are mergansers," Leavell

said. "Shovelers eat a lot of snails around here. I've never eaten a merganser ... Ducks that eat animal matter, whether it's snails or fish, are really bad-tasting."

A big step up from those are moss-eating ducks, like wigeon, gadwall, teal and pintail.

"They're pretty good," Leavell said.

"During duck season, the only thing we have around here that they eat much of is pond moss," Leavell said.

"The best ducks are ducks that eat grains or acorns," he added.

His favorite to eat of all the ducks are mallards.



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A guide to duck identification



Redhead duck



Gadwall



Northern pintail



Green-wing teal



Northern shoveler



Ring-necked duck

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3 T. extra-virgin olive oil
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2 T. dried oregano
2 T. sweet paprika
1 T. chipotle powder
2 T. ground coriander
1 T. ground cumin
1/2 tsp. ground cinnamon
6 cloves garlic, chopped
2 onions, chopped
1/2 jalapeño, chopped
3 pounds ground venison
two 28-ounce cans crushed tomatoes
4 cups (1 quart) chicken stock
2 T. masa harina
1 tsp. sugar
1/2 tablet Mexican chocolate, chopped

Directions for chili:

Heat the oil in a large pot over medium-high heat. Add the chili powder, oregano, paprika, chipotle powder, cumin, coriander and cinnamon; stir until toasted and

very aromatic, about 1 minute.

Add the garlic, onions and jalapeño and cook, stirring, until soft and translucent, about 3 minutes.

Add the venison and cook, stirring, until slightly brown, about 4 minutes.

Add the tomatoes, chicken stock, masa harina, sugar and chocolate. Bring to a boil, and then lower to a simmer and cook for 45 minutes.

JALAPEÑO CORNBREAD INGREDIENTS

1 1/2 cups cream
1 1/2 cups whole milk
2 T. unsalted butter
4 sprigs fresh thyme
2 cloves garlic, finely chopped
3/4 cup yellow cornmeal
3 T. chopped fresh chives
1 jalapeño, seeded and finely chopped
kosher salt
freshly ground black pepper
3 large eggs, separated

nonstick cooking spray

For serving:

1 cup sour cream
zest of 1 lime
fresh cilantro leaves

Directions for cornbread:

Preheat the oven to 375 degrees F. Combine the cream, milk, butter, thyme and garlic in a medium pot, and bring to a simmer. Add the cornmeal, whisking constantly, until thick and creamy, about 8 minutes.

Add the chives, jalapeño, 1 tsp. salt and 1/2 tsp. pepper, then mix in the egg yolks, one by one, stirring constantly, until just combined. Then remove from the heat.

Whisk the egg whites to stiff peaks, and fold into the batter.

Coat a cast-iron skillet or an 8-by-8-inch baking dish with cooking spray, and pour in the batter. Bake until golden brown around the edges

and a toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean, about 25 minutes.

Serve chili and cornbread with dollops of sour cream, lime zest and fresh cilantro leaves.



COURTESY PHOTO

Venison chili makes a good stick-to-the ribs meal on a cool hunting evening. Pair the dish with some jalapeño cornbread.



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Several hunters' welcome events on tap in the area

Three separate hunters' welcome events are scheduled in the Lampasas area just in time for the beginning of the general deer season.

The Lampasas County Chamber of Commerce, Adamsville Fire Department and Lometa United Methodist Church all are hosting events to welcome an influx of hunters into the area.

The chamber's annual Hunters' Welcome will take place in the H-E-B parking lot at 705 S. Key Ave. in Lampasas. The first 250 guests will receive free goody bags.

The Hunters' Welcome hours are 9:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Nov. 4. A Texas-size barbecue sandwich lunch is available \$10.

The Adamsville Volunteer Fire

Department will hold its 55th Annual Deer Hunter's Bar-B-Que on Nov. 5 from 5-9 p.m. at the Adamsville Community Center.

Adult dinner tickets are \$12, and children under 8 can eat for \$6.

A rifle raffle and reverse raffle, as well as an auction, will start at 6 p.m. For more information call 979-324-2808.

In Lometa, the Methodist Church will host its Awesome Autumn Stew lunch from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Nov. 5. The church is located at 100 S. Second St. in Lometa. Stew, cornbread, crackers, dessert and a drink will be served, with baked goods and snacks also available.

A donation of \$12 is recommended for the meal for adults and \$6 for children's plates.



KAYE MCDANIEL | COURTESY PHOTO



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KAYE MCDANIEL | COURTESY PHOTO



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County boasts abundance of wildlife

Good-quality whitetails and turkey can be found across the county, though some residents are content to enjoy the animals through the camera lens rather than through the lens of a scope.

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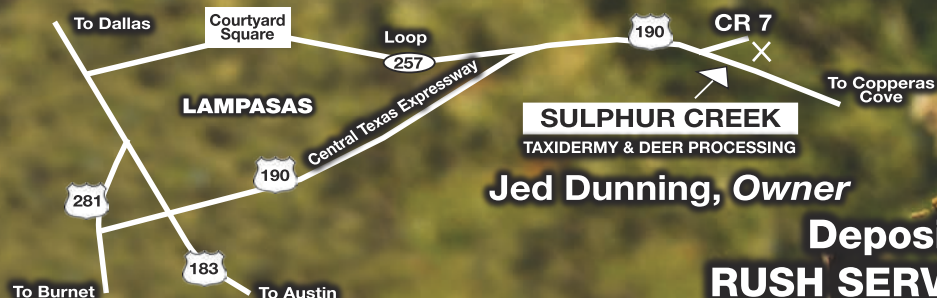


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