



Rib Eyes of the Sky

The December AWWC speaker is Colton Collen. His father introduced him to hunting dove, deer and if he was lucky – ducks. Colton enjoyed it all, but ducks were his favorite. His father leased a big buck lease in South Texas near the border at half of the going rate for deer hunting, just for ducks. On his first goose hunt – later on the Katy prairie – his first shot brought down two speckle-bellied geese with one 20-gauge shell. One of them was banded. Many hunters wait a lifetime for either of those feats. That was the start of it.

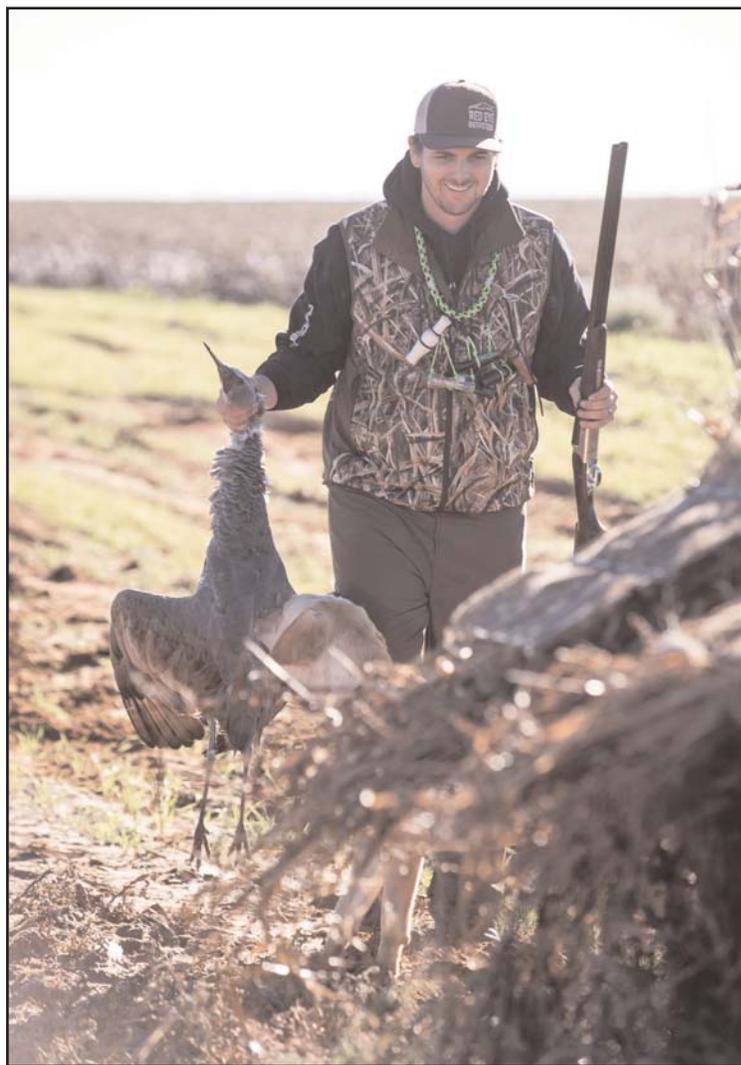
At age 14' Colton's family moved to Amarillo, where the game changed for him. There, he began chasing lesser Canada geese. He'd spend his mornings in the fields, learning the way they spoke, how they flew, where they fed – everything. It was truly all he thought about. By college, he was scoring continuously.

Then, they moved to Lubbock, which he calls "the best kept secret of waterfowl I've seen to date." He may be right.

Colton took college buddies hunting on weekends, which landed him jobs working for various outfitters in Lubbock. Sandhill crane hunting was something that was taught to him by a man he considers the best in the business. After some years of guiding for somebody else, he decided it was time to create his own outfit, one that would pride itself on one species, the sandhill crane.

He'll tell us about Panhandle waterfowl hunting which he calls the golden opportunity of pounding out limits of the best meat the sky has to offer – Sandhill Cranes, that some call the "rib eye of the sky!"

And he runs an outfit right in the middle of it.

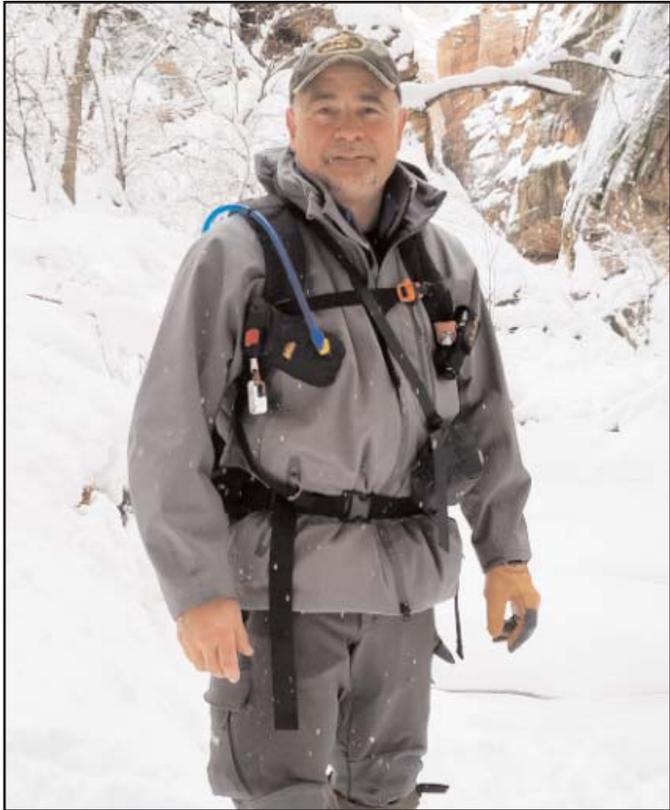


Colton Collen

Monthly Luncheon
Wed., Dec. 4th • 11:30 a.m.
Ben Hur Shrine Center
7811 Rockwood Lane
Speaker: Colton Collen on
Panhandle Sandhill Hunting

**NOMINATIONS ARE
NOW IN ORDER**
See Page 3

President's Message



Dunlap Still Drained

I started writing this message sitting in a tripod hugged up next to a cedar tree. The weather is perfect, 52 with a slight breeze; overhead are ducks honking their way home as they migrate south. About 40 yards away are two, maybe three squirrels cussing/fussing at each other while a Blue Jay circles overhead. A perfect time to be outside in a pitch perfect setting. No deer or hogs so far, but that is OK; I am enjoying everything this world offers me. I almost feel guilty writing these words instead of enjoying their view, the sounds and the scents. So I put my tablet down, breathe deeply, once, twice. I focus on the sounds around me. Off in the distance a dog barks.

See ya at the luncheon on the fourth to hear about Pandhandle sandhill cranes.

Stephen Fenoglio
512.347.9944

Dunlap Dam on the Guadalupe River which forms Lake Dunlap, suffered a gate collapse in the spring and quickly drained. That raised concerns about the next dams downstream which were just as old. The Guadalupe Blanco River Authority (GBRA), fearing the dams might go at any time, imposed strict prohibitions and spoke of draining those lakes for repairs.

The suspect dams affected lakes McQueeney, Placid, Meadow and Gonzales. Lake Wood dam, near Gonzales, failed earlier and drained. All six dams were built in the 1920s and 30s.

Lakeside landowners objected to draining the lakes. A lawsuit was filed, and an agreement reached. The lakes won't be lowered or drained by GBRA until the case is heard in October 2020.

Sadly, Lake Dunlap is still just a small river channel. Signs and buoys on the lakes mark the new zones. Local law enforcement will monitor the waters.



The Game Bag AWWC Monthly Newsletter

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Past President.....	Jimmy Cain		

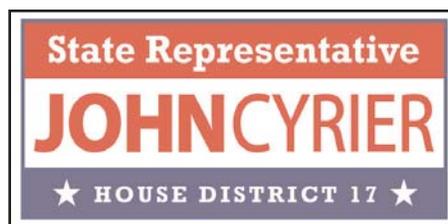
Game Bag Submissions

Members' photos, hunting and fishing stories, activity announcements, ads, and calendar items should be in the editor's hands by the 15th of each month prior to the month of publication. Send your material to: jj@johnjefferson.com or call (512) 219-1199.

Nominations Now Being Accepted ...

... For 2020 officers, directors, Sportsman of the Year and Volunteer of the Year. The latter two require an informal nomination letter setting out what you feel compels the nominee's consideration. Please send nominations to Jimmy Cain (jhcain_no@yahoo, com) by December 15. Elections for officers and directors will be held at the January 8 AWWC 11:30 lunch.

Austin Woods and Waters Club Thanks to the following Sponsors for their Support of the 2019 Banquet



Kansas Pheasant Hunt Booked - Nov. 15-17

We have booked a two-day pheasant hunt with Ringneck Ranch in Tipton Ks. We will arrive for dinner on Friday November 15 and start hunting about 8 am Saturday the 16 & 17. We will have lunch & hunt again in the afternoon. The price of \$575 per day includes 6 pheasant per day. Go to the website to check it out. I spoke with the owner for about an hour last week. We also have an opportunity for passing shots at prairie chickens in the afternoon. (I will be taking advantage of this.) So, total price for two days is \$1150 with no airfare because it is within driving distance. Deposit will be \$500 per person. I reserved 8 spots for AWWC. No money now. You can call me at 512-241-0049 (office) or 512-699-3093 (cell) with questions. Email Larry. Najvar@gmail.com. Speak up as I must give her numbers next week. After we firm up the numbers, we will collect deposits.



Jefferson Photo©2019

Other Hunt Possibilities

AWWC members: Let me know which hunts you are interested in. If we have enough hunters, I will line up dates, prices and deposit info. Most of these hunts run about \$275 per day with some \$250 and \$300 per day quotes, depending on the outfitter.

1. Duck hunts in East Texas just like the last few years. We have already reserved Jan. 4 & 5 as well as the following weekend, Jan. 11 & 12.



2. Duck hunts in Port Lavaca. This is an inland hunt with varied species. (not just redheads like in Rockport.) I hunted snow geese with this outfitter and was impressed.



3. Ducks and geese in Jennings, LA with Doug's outfitters. I want to hunt them the first period as they have ducks sooner than Texas.

4. Sandhill cranes. We have used Panhandles Best but I'm impressed with Muddy Waters out of Wichita Falls. They had 3 guides for a group of 11 hunters. Dates will probably range from mid-November thru January, around Lubbock or the Panhandle.



Jefferson Photo©2019



5. Snow goose conservation hunt around Port Lavaca around February 1. Bag limit is 20/ day, with unlimited possession limit!

6. Hidden lakes European style pheasant hunt. They release 500 birds, one at a time. You shoot from one station and rotate after each 50 birds. I shot 6 boxes of shells last hunt. The birds are high, fast, very challenging. Price is \$540 (including tip). Last hunt of the season is Saturday, March 16. Let me know if you are interested as they tend to book up quickly.



Any suggestions for hunts or outfitters that you would like to investigate?? We want to do this early, so we get the best availability. Also, do you want to hunt only on weekends or are you available during the week? larry.najvar@gmail.com office 512-241-0049 cell 512 699-3093

Larry Najvar, Chief Warden for Hunting

MORE 2019-20 HUNTS

By Larry Najvar, Chief Hunting Warden

No actual bookings until we see how many people are interested. Let us know if interested. Plan on about \$250 per day for a hunt.

1. Topflight Outfitters; Columbus, TX. Only a few miles down the road. I went on two teal hunts on the third weekend and saw probably several hundred teal each day. Their blinds and guides are awesome. You can bring your own dog. We hunted released quail and chukar in the afternoon.
2. Doug's Lodge, Gueydan, La. Hunted there for several years. ducks or geese.
3. Ranger Creek Outfitters (Haskell Tx) or Muddy Waters (Wichita Falls) for Sandhill cranes, geese and ducks.
4. Hidden Lakes, Yantis, Tx. (See photo, previous page, bottom right.) Great European style pheasant hunts. Birds are released from a central tower with 10 stations in a circle, about 60 yards apart. The birds are flying about 30 mph and high. A challenging hunt. 500 released birds are about \$500 which includes lunch. (I leave at 7am, arrive 11:30, lunch at noon and hunting starts 1 pm. Home about 9 pm. (Did you know a Beretta A 391 with the plug removed can hold 6 shots? Ask me how many times I wound up with an empty gun.)

Contact Larry Najvar at the email and cell below and give me your email and cell. Any questions? Contact me at larry.najvar@gmail.com. Cell 512-699-3093

Waterfowl Hunters: Help Prevent Spread of Giant Salvinia

With duck hunting season underway in most of the state, the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) is reminding waterfowl hunters to clean, drain and dry boats and equipment before traveling from lake to lake to help avoid spreading invasive species like giant salvinia.

In addition to cleaning their boats and trailers, hunters should also make sure they aren't inadvertently carrying the invasive species on other equipment like waders, decoys and marsh sleds.

"Giant salvinia is often thought of as a plant that blocks recreational access for anglers and boaters, but it can cause serious problems for waterfowl hunters too," said John Findeisen, Brookeland Aquatic Habitat Enhancement Team Lead. "Not only does it form thick mats that block access for hunters to prime waterfowl hunting areas, it can also outgrow and replace the native plants that waterfowl rely on for food and habitat.

TPWD Considering Bag Changes On Brushy Creek

At the recent TPW Commission meeting, a change in bag limits on Brushy Creek Lake was proposed. Staff is considering changing the largemouth bass limit to the statewide regulation of 14-inch minimum. Downstream on Brushy Creek, blue and channel catfish bag limits are possibly to be reduced to five fish per day with no minimum length limit and only two poles and line permitted as gear down to the Milam County line.

Opening New Lake in Cedar Park Delayed

The new lake in Cedar Park that was said to be opened in late 2019 has been delayed until possibly March 2020.

Member-to-Member

Telephoto Lenses for Sale. 500 mm Nikkor ED manual focus lens (see deer photo page 10). \$900. A Sigma 120-400 mm auto-focus zoom lens (Nikon mount). \$375. Both have carrying cases and in very good condition. I'm upgrading. John Jefferson (512) 219-1199. jj@johnjefferson.com.

Where are the Pictures??

Is Larry Najvar the only one who's been hunting and taken any pictures? Or the only one who carries a cell phone?

Send the *Game Bag* your hunting or fishing success photos at jj@johnjefferson.com.

Please send them "Actual Size" and ask the subjects to remove sunglasses so we can see who they are.

And, no blood, please.

Thanks, JJ.

Ringneck Ranch Romp

By Larry Najvar, AWWC Hunting Warden



Our guide, Avery, is talking with Jeff Hotz about the dog while Cliff Hall and Joe Jelinski look on. Bob Kinney and Tom McGonagill are on the other side of the truck.

I have hunted pheasants in S. Dakota three times at two different lodges. I enjoyed each of those hunts. However, Ringneck Ranch was spectacular. In the words of Jeff Hotz, "Ringneck Ranch exceeded my expectations." It is in Tipton Kansas, about 700 miles from Austin. We saved plane fare by driving.

The goal of Ringneck Ranch is for you to feel you are hunting birds on Grandpa's ranch (If Grandpa was a pheasant expert and a bird dog collector). They pulled it off. There are many factors. All the fields we walked had mowed lanes for the hunters to walk so we were not pushing through high grasses. Blockers often had as many or more shots at birds than the walking hunters.

Food was home cooked and as good, as expected. While our birds were mostly pen raised, I asked our guide (Avery) why the birds ran and flew so well. He said it was genetics, nutrition and good housing (300- and 600-yard flying pens). (It makes a difference. Editor)

Each day we had breakfast promptly at 7:30. The first hunt started at 8:15 and we had a break at 10 am. Lunch at noon. Afternoon hunts started at 1:15 (unless someone was doing gunsmithing work on the tailgate of their truck.) We had another break at about 3 pm, or so.

On Saturday we had a slow start on our first hunt with 3 birds harvested. The second hunt, we had 11 birds, giving us 14 for the morning. The first afternoon hunt yielded 12 birds and we wrapped it up in the late pm with another 10 for 36 birds on Saturday. We were finished with plenty of daylight left.

Sunday, we harvested 18 chukar (8 of which were leftovers from other hunts) and 36 pheasants and were done by 3 pm.

On Monday we were down to 5 hunters and we harvested 33 birds and were done by about 2:30.

I plan on going back next year (and every year thereafter if I am able to hunt). In fact, some of our hunters had to drop out for flu reasons and plan on going in late January or February. I will probably join them.



This trailer is where birds were deposited to be cleaned after each hunt.

Their "perfect group" is five hunters. We hunted with six. There was a group of seven hunters, and they were split into two groups of three and four.

The hunt was the usual blending of birds flying to the other side and the other hunters getting all the shots and then suddenly all the birds are coming our way, and I am glad I don't have a plug in my gun. One bird was a pretty long shot and when it fell it scared up another rooster and I wound up shooting five shots in a very short period of time. (Sometimes I miss.)

Just a great hunt! Thinking back, I enjoyed the three-day hunt, but I would not have been disappointed if I had hunted 2 days.

Their website is www.ringneckranch.net. The deposit for a two-day hunt was \$500 and the three-day hunt was \$750. The price is \$595 per day which includes meals and lodging. I had so much fun I almost forgot to take pictures.

HOGS KILL TEXAS WOMAN

According to his "Wilderness Wednesday" e-mail on November 27 from my longtime friend, Chester Moore, editor of Texas Fish and Game magazine, a woman near Anahuac in southeast Texas was recently killed by a hog ... or hogs. The Chambers County sheriff confirmed the case and said the medical examiner's report said she did not die from natural causes or canine bites but from what appeared to be an attack by several feral hogs. This was reported on TV station KFDM.com.

Moore's message stated that in a survey of nation-wide hog-caused deaths, Texas leads America with 24% of the deaths reported from the 21 states having such deaths.

I've written several times that growing up in east Texas and spending much significant time in the Big Thicket along Beach Creek, my mentor, Uncle Josh Munro told me, "There are many things in the woods that can hurt you, Little Jack, but hogs can kill you ... and eat you."

Stay away from ALL feral hogs – even cute little piglets. Mama will be nearby. And mean.

Rainbow Trout Galore

By John Jefferson

That was the title to the first outdoor article I ever wrote. It was a play on words lifted from the risqué name of the "Bond Girl" in a '60-ish James Bond movie. The Galore part also came from the number of trout, large and small, that were originally stocked for the first time in the cold water of the Guadalupe River below Canyon Dam. Some were 14-inches long. My first one tail-danced all the way to the net!

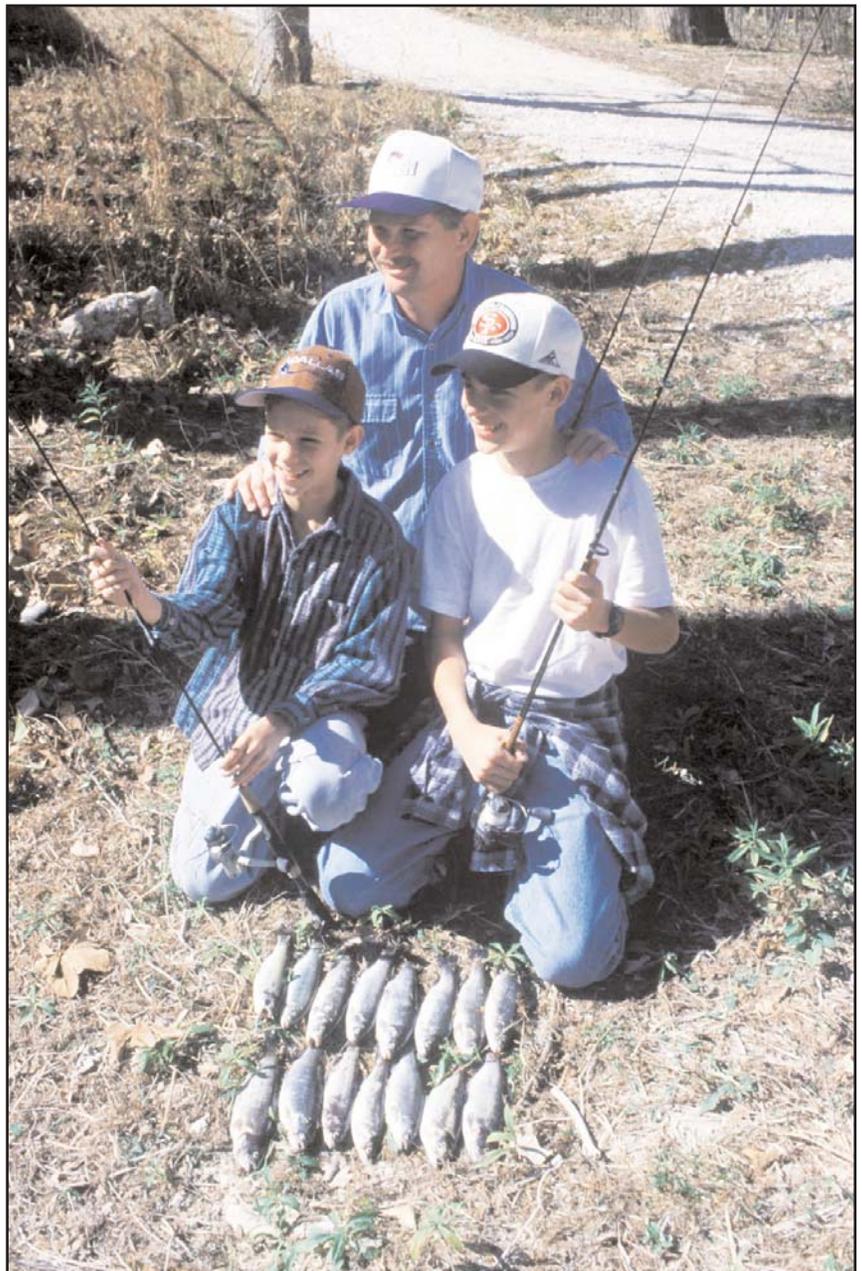
Few, if any of us, realized that spring day in 1966 when the first stocking took place that it was the beginning of a new era of fishing in Texas. Trout galore have been stocked in Texas waters all over the state since then. Millions of rainbow and brown trout have been placed. In the mid-sixties, Canyon Dam had been completed, and released water from the bottom of Canyon Lake was extremely cold. Fisheries biologists with Texas Parks and Wildlife Dept. (TPWD) realized that the Guadalupe River fishery below the dam would be changed by the cold water and began considering a species that could tolerate the colder temperature. Trout seemed a good possibility. The TPW Commission approved the experiment, and with help from Lone Star Brewing Company which had leftover trout each year from fishing tanks at boat shows, began the stocking.

It worked. Some of the fish lived for a while in the cold water. Most were caught by eager anglers and their kids. Few trout survived until summer. Soon, TPWD realized that stocking trout in other water bodies would encourage more people to fish. Nowadays, 326,668 catchable-size trout are stocked in 174 sites scattered around every region of Texas but concentrated around the most populous areas. Some venues are Medina River at Landmark Inn, Waldron Park (Corpus), Carl Young Park (Abilene), Eldridge Park Pond (Sugar Land), Mount Belview City Park, and Louise Hays Park (Kerrville). Stocking begins in late Nov. and early Dec. and continues into Jan. and sometimes Feb.

A complete list of stocking sites can be found at the TPWD website: www.tpwd.texas.gov/troutstocking. The creel limit is five trout per day. There is no length limit. Unless you are fishing in a state park, adults must have a fishing license and a \$5 Freshwater Fishing Stamp which is included in all freshwater license packages. Anglers under 17 are exempt from license and stamp requirements but must abide by the five fish limit. Bank fishing is possible.

A popular site is the Guadalupe just below Canyon Dam. Special regulations for a marked stretch of the river starting 800 yards downstream from the dam are set out in the TPW Outdoor Annual, page 35-36 but from the dam downstream to that area, any tackle and bait is permitted. Worms, yellow corn, Velveeta Cheese and salmon eggs are good baits. Small Mepps or Panther Martin inline spinners and flies are also effective.

For more information and stocking times, contact the hatchery: (512/353-0572).



Most of the hatchery fish stocked statewide by TPWD are small, catchable-size trout. These were stocked below Canyon Dam in the Guadalupe River. Jefferson photo.



The Guadalupe River Chapter of Trout Unlimited (GRTU) stocked trophy-size trout in an area starting 800 yards downstream from Canyon Dam on the Guadalupe River. Signage marks the area beginning. The GRTU trout are 18-inches long or longer. Trout in this restricted area may only be retained if caught under the special restrictions on Page 46 of the TPW Outdoor Annual. Photo by John Jefferson.

Trout Stocking in Guadalupe River Canyon Lake Tailrace 20,498 trout

12/6/2019, 12/13/2019, 12/20/2019, 12/27/2019, 1/3/2020, 1/10/2020, 1/17/2020,
1/24/2020, 1/31/2020

Mistaken Bacon

A West Texas game warden received a call about possible spotlights. After making his way across the field, the warden approached two individuals that were hunting around a wheat circle. They claimed they were pig hunting and had harvested a pig earlier. The warden asked the subjects if he could see the pig they shot and it was determined that it was not a pig, but a javelina, a game animal. Charges and restitution are pending.

Javelinas are game animals by law and cannot be hunted at night, as feral hogs can be.

Want Larger Antlers?

By John Jefferson

In 1981, I was hired to photograph deer from a helicopter over a 5,000-acre ranch near the border. A TPWD deer biologist was scheduled to fly an aerial survey of the deer, and I was to accompany him with my cameras. The helicopter arrived first with the wildlife biologist on its heels – a large guy with a red beard and a matching bandana around his neck. I introduced myself.

He replied, "I'm Larry Weishuhn. You ready to fly?" That started a 40-year friendship and a new dimension to my life. I've since flown some interesting ranches and seen a lot of the Brush Country from the air. And loved it.

Shortly after that, Weishuhn began writing about deer and deer hunting and became famous. I've learned a lot – some from years of hunting, some from riding in choppers and much from things Larry and others have written. Last month, I read an article in *Sporting Classics Magazine* by him.

A reader had asked if the buck-doe ratio affected antler size. Does have as much or more to do with a buck fawn's genetics as its daddy. But Larry's reply included a clear reason why shooting does can greatly contribute to creating large antlers!

Larry pointed to longer breeding seasons on ranches that had wide buck-to-doe ratios – say one buck for every six does. Deer breeding is not a hit-and-run thing. The buck and doe stay together for a period called "tending", sometimes as long as 24 hours, according to experts, and breeding several times. Some bucks don't get around to breeding all the does that come into estrus the first or second or more times, thus dragging out the breeding season.

We know that bucks get worn down during breeding. The wider the buck-doe ratio, the longer breeding lasts, and the longer it takes for bucks to recover. That can get them well into winter when the habitat is stressed. High protein groceries are limited. And the wider the buck-doe ratio, the more competition for remaining browse.

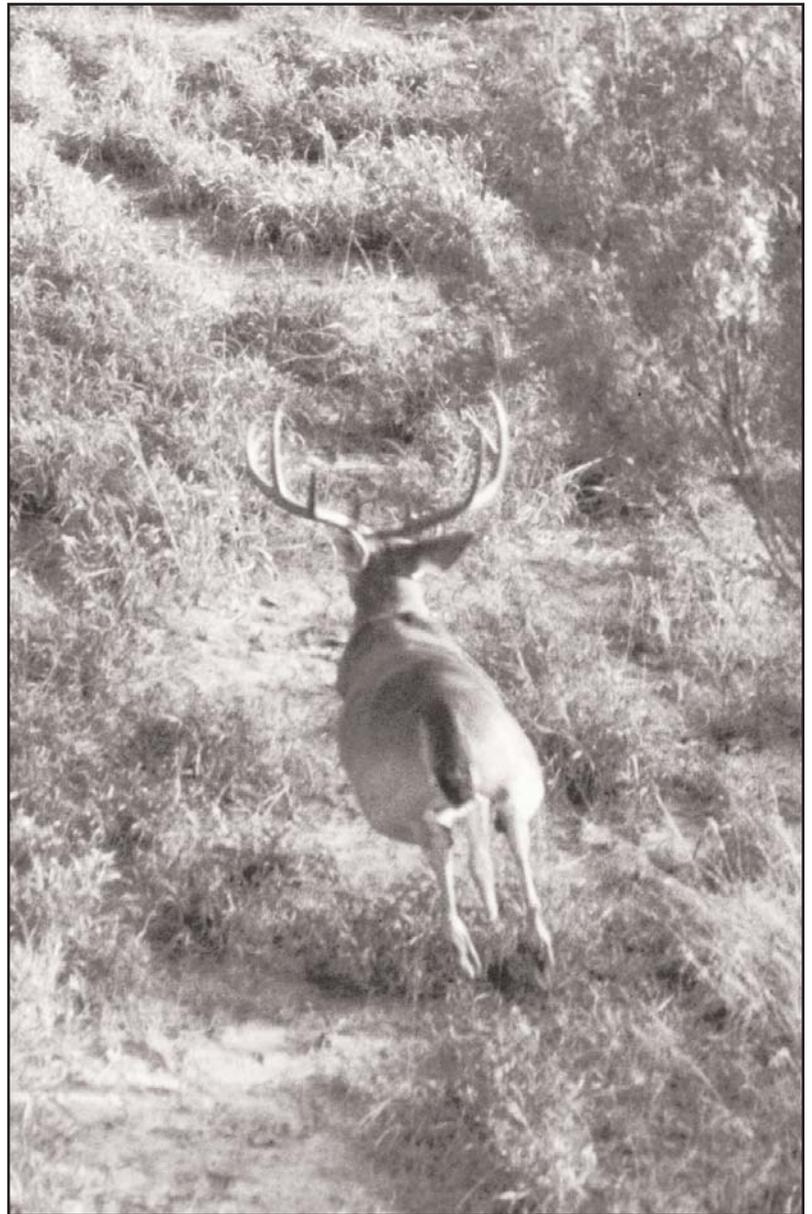
The result is that when it's time for antler development to begin in early spring, bucks may still be replenishing bodies worn down from breeding. And bucks' food intake goes first to bodily needs before antler development, according to published research. In winter, Larry wrote that protein levels of available browse could drop as low as four percent. More is needed for maximum antler development.

"By removing does, you decrease pressure on browse... providing more quality food for remaining deer. They (bucks) came out of the rut in better body condition (this year), and that improved antler development," Weishuhn wrote.

He also stated that the natural ratio on un hunted ranches was 1:1.5. Striving for that could well lead to larger antlers in the future.

But it can only be attained by shooting more does. TPWD expected a large survival of fawns this year due to all the rain that began in September 2018. We could be looking at an unusually large fawn crop to join the deer herd this year, increasing the existing herd of over five million!

Shoot 'em if you got 'em!



Photographing deer from a helicopter can provide unique images of deer and other critters like coyotes, javelinas, quail and raptors. It's also challenging for the photographer as well as the pilot, who must maneuver the aircraft to give the photographer a good view of the animal and avoid power lines and other structures that could lead to a crash. There are also ethical considerations. Photo ©John Jefferson 2019.

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Parting Shot



Colton Collen with cranes. See page 1.

AWWC CALENDAR

- Dec. 4 AWWC Luncheon 11:30 a.m.
 Ben Hur Shrine Center 7811 Rockwood Lane
 Speaker: Colton Collen, a fanatical Panhandle waterfowl guide.
- Jan. 5 Deer and Rio Grande turkey seasons end in North Texas (Hill Country)
 Late antlerless and spike season runs Jan. 6 - Jan. 19
- Jan. 8 AWWC luncheon. We'll be watching bowl games and eating black-eyed peas on Wed. Jan. 1 so luncheon is a week later!
 Ben Hur Shrine Center 7811 Rockwood Lane
 Speaker: Chris Jackson, Owner & Lead Guide Action Angler & Outdoor Center near Canyon City
- Jan. 19 Deer and Rio Grande turkey seasons end in South Texas, Late antlerless and spike seasons run Jan. 20 - Feb. 2
- Feb. 5 Evening meeting to install officers, announce Sportsman of the Year and Volunteer of the Year. Location and speaker to be announced.
- Feb 21-23 TroutFest 2020, Lazy L&L Campground, 11699 River Rd, New Braunfels, TX (near Canyon City)