

ANTELOPE HUNT



THE first antelope hunt in Texas in 41 years was a complete success. Of the 328 hunters afield, 90.5 percent were successful in taking one of the 297 antelope killed. Hunters and ranchers alike were pleased with the methods used in conducting the hunt, which was the first supervised hunt ever undertaken by the Game, Fish and Oyster Commission.

Gov. Coke Stevenson made the first kill of the hunt at sunup the opening day, October 2, on the Kokernot ranch near Alpine. His selection was a trophy that served as a mark which only a few other hunters were able to surpass before the end of the three periods of hunting, October 11.

Although the Commission authorized the assignment of up to 500 antelope permits, only 402 were issued because that was the number recommended by field men who surveyed the herds on each ranch. Of the 402 places, 20 percent were reserved for the landowners if they wanted them. Thus, only 371 were available for those who made application. At the time of the deadline for the public applications, August 29, a few less than 371 had made applications and a drawing was therefore unnecessary. During the days immediately after the

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deadline, additional applications were received, the remaining places were filled, and some applications were returned. Many hunters expressed the attitude that they did not make application because they thought hundreds of others would. It is expected that this cause for hesitancy about making applications will be much less in evidence if future antelope hunts are held.

The Commission was able to conduct the antelope hunt because full regulatory power over wildlife in the counties west of the Pecos was vested in it by the last Legislature. The surplus antelope resulted from long protection by the ranchers and game wardens of that section, and from trapping and restocking operations of the Federal Aid Division in recent years. Some of the bucks killed had tags in their ears, a record of their having been trapped and transplanted within the past five years. Since no hunting had been done and the natural sex ratio is approximately 50-50, a surplus of bucks was on the range. A sex ratio of one buck to five does is thought suffi-

cient for satisfactory breeding. So in spite of the fact that antelope are still on the increase, no harm was done by the hunt.

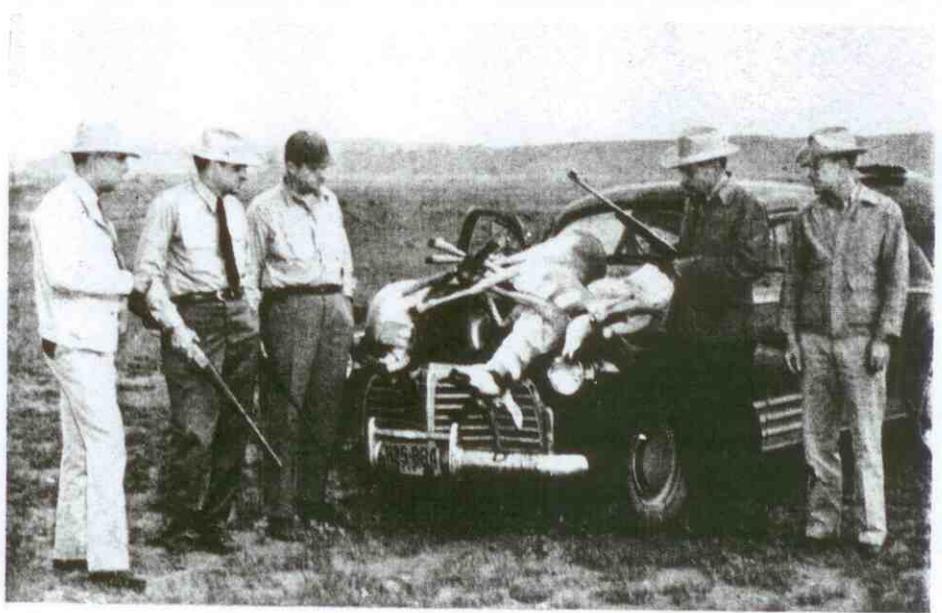
The high degree of success of the hunters in getting their antelope reflects the vulnerability of the species and points to the fact that all future antelope hunting in Texas must be regulated as to the number of animals taken from specific pastures if the species is to be maintained and increased.

Several ranchers who were apprehensive about the disturbance hunters would cause on a ranch did not participate in the hunt, but will be ready to cooperate with the Department if another hunt is held next year. It is likely that from 500 to 700 surplus antelope will be available for a similar hunt next year in the Trans-Pecos region. Also, a few ranches in the Panhandle should be surveyed for the possibility of killing perhaps a hundred in that section next year. However, it will be necessary for the legislature to provide the necessary regulatory authority before any such hunt could be conducted outside the Trans-Pecos.

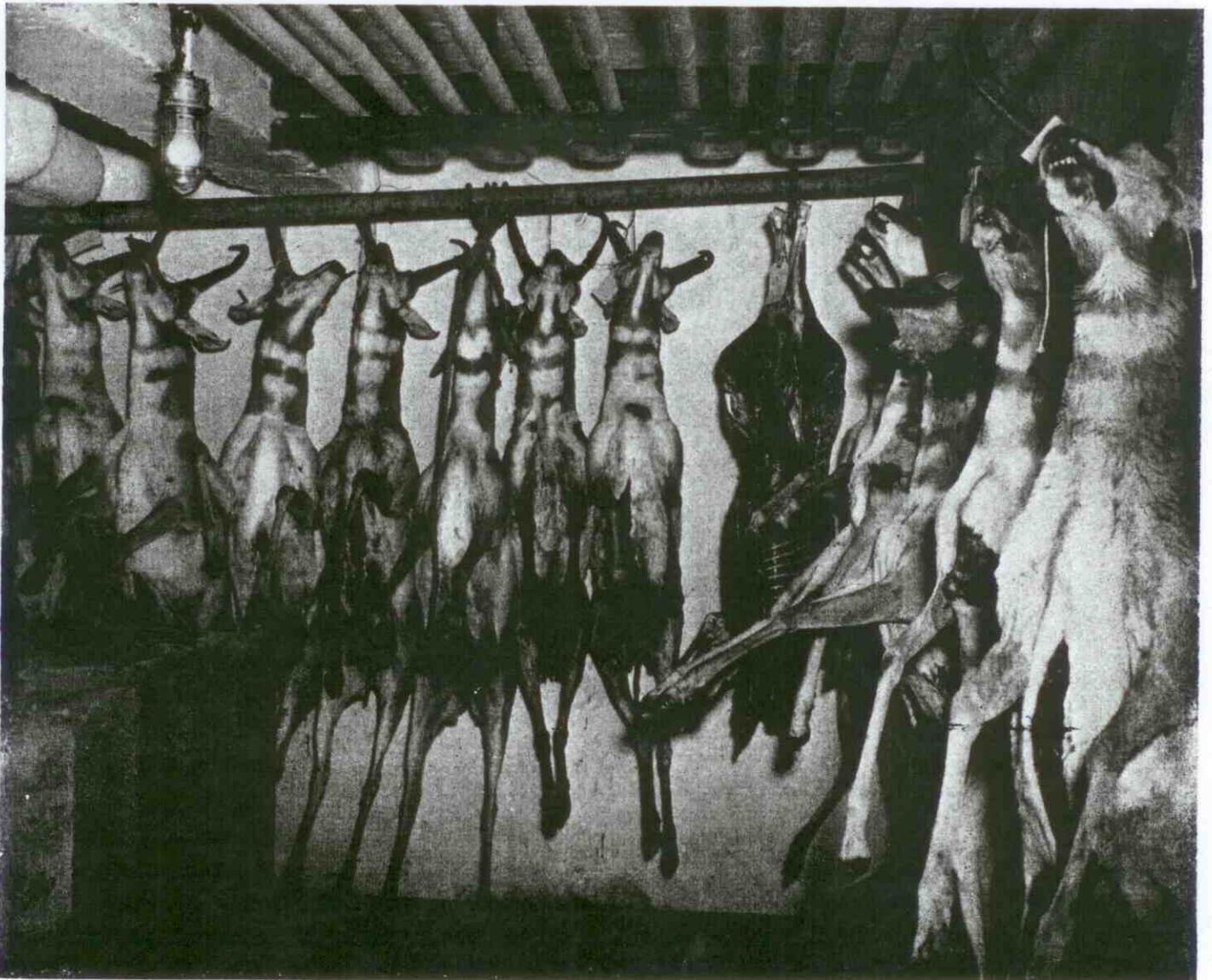
A special antelope permit was sold to the successful applicants for \$5.00 and this fee hardly paid the costs to the Department of conducting the hunt, since

a number of extra game wardens were moved long distances to help supervise the hunt. The landowners operated licensed shooting preserves and were permitted to charge hunters not more than \$25 each for access to the antelope. Most of them made this charge. Since all of the hunting was on private lands (Texas does not have the vast acreages of public domain other states use) the cooperative participation of the individual landowners was necessary.

The hunt on the 27 ranches was divided into three sections. The ranches around Alpine were hunted October 2, 3 and 4. Those around Marfa were hunted October 5, 6 and 7. Those in Hudspeth and Culberson counties were hunted October 9, 10 and 11. This facilitated the close supervision of the hunters. Hunters were checked in and out of their assigned pastures by regular game wardens. This degree of supervision was necessary because antelope do not cross fences readily and it was necessary to limit the kill by pastures. It was also desirable to work closely with each party of hunters because the chances of having other hunts later depended upon the



FIRST KILLS—Gov. Coke Stevenson and his secretary, Ernest Boyette were among the first hunters to check in with their antelope. From left to right the hunters are Ranger Capt. Gully Cowser, Ernest Boyette, Kenneth McCalla, Austin attorney, Governor Stevenson and George Willaby, foreman of the Kokernot ranch on which the Governor and his party bagged their antelope. Below—a section of the cold storage plant at Alpine where the antelope killed during the first legal antelope hunt in Texas in 41 years were stored. The average dressed weight of the antelope killed was 94 pounds.



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GOV. COKE R. STEVENSON and the fine antelope buck he bagged soon after sunup on the opening day of the antelope season on the Kokernot ranch near Alpine. The Governor is an ardent sportsman and one of the best rifle shots in the state.

ranchers' being satisfied with the conduct of the first hunt.

Most of the hunting was done with the aid of automobiles, used for stalking, but shooting from automobiles and chasing antelope in automobiles was prohibited. In some of the flat grassland pastures hunters afoot would have had little chance of success; but in the rougher foothill country automobiles were often useless and there was enough cover for stalking afoot. A few hunters used horses. One serviceman hunter arrived by train, killed his antelope, and got it back to Waco in good shape by carrying it on top of buses at night and holding it in cold storage during the day.

Only six game law violations were discovered (and under the strict supervision few could have escaped notice). Four hunters paid fines for killing does, through shooting into running bands, which was prohibited. One hunter shot from an automobile. One hunted without a permit. Only one accident came to our notice. An over-anxious hunter jumped out of an automobile before it stopped and broke his leg. Crippling losses of antelope were very low, probably under ten.

Checking stations were operated at the ice houses in Alpine and Marfa by biologists Henry Hahn, Frank Etheredge, and the writer, for the purpose of obtaining data on the condition of the antelope for comparison with statistics from later hunts. At some future date this data may reflect valuable information relative to serious changes in the size, age classes, and condition of the Texas antelope. It is also interesting to compare the Texas measurements with those taken in other states.

The record weight (dressed by removal of all organs) was 94 pounds. Record horn length was 16 inches, circumference $6\frac{3}{4}$ inches and spread $16\frac{1}{2}$ inches. But these records were on different trophies. The average weight was 72.1 pounds.

Arizona has conducted three such antelope hunts, and it is interesting to note that only 73.9 percent of the hunters were successful on the 1941 hunt which was their first one. But the antelope killed were somewhat larger, the record weight being 101 pounds and the record horn length being $18\frac{1}{2}$ inches.

The six most popular rifles among the hunters checked on the Texas hunt and the number of hunters using each were: 300 S, 41 hunters; 306, 22 hunters; 30-30, 22 hunters; 270, 17 hunters; 35, 12 hunters; and the 30-06, 11 hunters.

The prospects for additional controlled antelope hunts in the future are good. Hunters like them because they give them access to hunting most of them could not obtain otherwise, and ranchers like them because they are relieved of



the responsibility of supervising the harvesting of the game and the monetary compensation interests some of them. Most of the ranchers participating in the antelope hunt never operate shooting preserves for other types of hunting such as mule deer because of the trouble involved. In spite of the extra work for the limited personnel of the Department and the necessary regimentation (which none of us like) this type of controlled hunt seems to have much to offer in the Texas hunting field. Biologically it is certainly the soundest method of managing our big game herds.

New Pollution Drive Planned

Claiming that carefully drawn laws and the untiring efforts of various associations had failed to halt pollution of fishing waters in the United States, Julian T. Crandall, well-known angler of Ashaway, R. I., suggests the formation of local "Minute-Men" committees for the protection of fishing waters.

Pointing out that the angler cannot afford to "let George" handle the preservation of his sport, he urges that vigilant committees of fishermen be formed to keep a sharp lookout for evidence of local pollution and to arouse and bring to bear public opinion to the end that such pollution may be stopped abruptly before it gains headway.

Upon the slightest sign of pollution, the Minute Men would go into action. The first step would be to call on the responsible party and have a showdown. If that did not bring results, they would hold a meeting and invite the press. Committee men would talk up the shameful situation to their friends and neighbors. Laws "with joints stiff from lack of exercise" would be invoked. If conditions were bad enough, a mass meeting would be called to arouse the citizens.

"No one, no organization of any kind, can buck public opinion and get away with it," Mr. Crandall states. "Not in this country, at least."

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