TEXAS PARKS AND WILDLIFE

Making Tracts for TEXAS WILDLIFE

Fall/Winter 2002 • Wildlife Division

Lee County Wildlife Management Association

by Greg Pleasant, TPWD Biologist, Giddings

The Lee County Wildlife Association is unique from other County Wildlife Associations in its structure and operation. Lee County has five separate co-ops: Two Creeks, South Lee, West Yegua, East Yegua and Blue Branch, which are separated by geographical boundaries in the county yet they operate as one organization. Three directors from each of the individual co-ops serve as officers of the Association. There is one budget, one set of bylaws but each co-op still has its own local meetings to keep neighbors in touch with each other in a more personal setting. Founded in 1996, there are currently 382 members representing 91,908 acres in the Lee County Wildlife Association.

Many landowners derive all or part of their income from livestock, farming, oil/gas production, hunting and fishing. The goal of the association is to increase the quantity and quality of wildlife species (particularly white-tailed deer) through the improvement of their habitat. When the co-op was formed, much of the county had few deer. Deer densities, fawn survival, age structure and quality of bucks have increased over recent years due to the common commitment of the association members and the positive effect the co-op has on surrounding landowners.

As part of their co-op activities, members collect herd composition data and conduct spotlight surveys, both of which add tremendously to the biological data collected each year. Members were also instrumental in gathering support for the passage of the experimental hunting regulation (see page 6) and are contributing to the prizes offered to entice hunters to register their harvest.

Numerous programs and field days are organized each year on topics as diverse as birding to the care of game heads for taxidermy. The association strives to instill conservation awareness in future generations by offering annual scholarship money for youths to attend natural resource directed camps such as Bobwhite and Buckskin Brigades.

Five outstanding bucks were harvested in Lee County during the 2001-2002 season. Three were entered in the TBGA program and two were eligible for the Perfect Eight award program.

Within the co-op, predator control is emphasized through the sponsorship of an annual contest with prizes for the most coyotes taken.

Because of the outstanding wildlife management efforts within the five co-ops comprising the Lee County Wildlife Management Association, the co-op received the Lone Star Land Steward Award for 2002. Directors were honored at a special ceremony in Austin on May 29, 2002.

For more information about the Lee County Wildlife Management Association, or for other general wildlife information in Lee County, contact Greg Pleasant at (979) 540-3492.

Inside Tracts

TPWD Commission Chairman Katharine Armstrong (4th from right), Executive Director Robert Cook (far right) poses with Happy Rogers, Chairman of the Private Lands Advisory Committee (3rd from right), and members of the Lee County Wildlife Management Association, shown holding their Lone Star Land Steward Award certificate and plaque.

As the Crow Flies

by Jim Dillard, TPWD Technical Guidance Biologist, Mineral Wells

I'll never forget the winter I spent up in the Panhandle in Wheeler, Texas. If there was one crow in that country there was a million. It was like a scene right out of Alfred Hitchcock's "The Birds." Every evening around sundown, long streaming lines of crows came from miles and miles in all directions, heading for their roost in a shinnery mott somewhere south of town. Their flight was fluid, like a river flowing over unseen boulders beneath the surface, rising and falling in the wind but straight to their nocturnal roost. The ruckus they made greeting each other could be heard for miles around as they seemed to have plenty to crow about. It's pretty obvious where the old saying "as the crow flies" comes from if you've ever watched crows coming and going. They seldom detour once they've set their course.

The American crow, *Corvus brachyrhynchos*, is native to North America, ranging from Central Canada to the Gulf States. They're close kin to ravens, magpies and jays. Some northern birds drift south during the winter forming large communal aggregations like those I've witnessed in the Panhandle. In West Texas, they're replaced by the common raven (*C. corax*) and the Chihuahaun raven (*C. cryptoleucus*).

Crows are a familiar sight and sound here in North Texas and usually the first bird I hear when I'm out in the country, *caw-caw-cawing* from somewhere off in the distance. They have several calls used to communicate crow to crow. Hawks and owls discovered by crows are usually mobbed and tormented with strafing raids and really mad crow sounds, forcing them to leave the area.

They're found just about everywhere there are open fields, croplands and woods where they can use their omnivorous eating style to make a living. We probably have more crows today than in the past as a lot of land in the United States has been put into cultivation, cleared and developed. City crows can eek out a living scavenging garbage and other edibles found there. They're not picky and will literally eat anything including grains, fruits, berries, insects, invertebrates, small mammals, snakes, snails, bird eggs, garbage and carrion. Crows seldom tempt fate when dining on road-kill cuisine by taking just one more bite like buzzards do as that 18 wheeler approaches at 75 mph and wind up road-kill themselves. I don't think I've ever seen a crow run over – they're much too smart for that.

Crows are about 18 inches tall with large feet they use for perching, grasping and hopping. Their tail is fan shaped. The bill is all purpose and tough as steel. It's used to hammer, chisel, crack, probe, split and tear, sorta like a, you guessed it – "crowbar." Both sexes are black so it takes one to know who's who. They mate for life and can live 7-8 years in the wild and up to 30 in captivity. Their bulky stick nests are usually built high up in trees at the base of a branch along the trunk. From this "crow's nest" vantage point, the female lays 4-6 dull blue-green eggs, blotched with brown and gray. Incubation takes 18 days and young stay in the nest 4 to 5 weeks, being tended by both parents and other "helper" crows. I've seen owls use old abandoned crow nests for their own.

Crows are one of the most intelligent of all birds. Their eagle-eye vision and extreme wariness makes them hard to sneak up on. They seem to know exactly the range of most shotguns and stay beyond it. "Scare-crows" don't seem to work either, and if anything, a smart crow will figure out they only mean there's food to be had, so "come on down!" Pet crows have even been trained to mimic the human voice. By the way, a flock of crows is called a "murder" for you trivia buffs.

In Texas, crows are classified as unprotected birds and may be controlled without state or federal depredation permits where found committing or about to commit depredations on ornamental or shade trees, agricultural crops, livestock or wildlife, or when concentrated in numbers and in a manner that constitutes a health hazard or other nuisance. A hunting license is required.

We've all had to retract a statement or admit an error – around here that's called "eating crow." I know, I do it often. Some people take a sip of "Old Crow" from time to time – around here that's called "drinking crow." And don't worry about those "crow's feet" around the corner of your eyes, they're only a sign of wisdom. But there's lots to be said about the virtues of the crow, like steering a straight path "as the crow flies" when you're traveling, keeping your head up in the wind and your eye glued to the ground, and crow about something every now and then, even when you don't have a reason. Until next time – I'll see you down the road and *God Bless America.*

Moist Soil Management Improves Waterfowl Habitat for Duck Hunting

by Carl Frentress, TPWD Regional Waterfowl Biologist – East Texas

Duck hunters across the state continue to relate stories about their experiences during the past duck season. Many of these folks are less than satisfied with the abundance of ducks that visited hunting sites. Although the validity of these anecdotes remains unchallenged, some suggestions related to potential solutions can be offered. Guaranteed remedies are not at hand, but intensive habitat management can improve the chances for duck hunting success.

Excellent availability of abundant food in their habitats is a powerful factor for attracting ducks. Fortunately, many wetlands can be managed to produce abundant duck foods. These management methods are especially applicable to wetlands that are enhanced or created by means of artificial structures to impound and control shallow water. Collectively, the repertoire of effective techniques is known as moist soil management.

Moist soil management involves the use of water control devices to regulate the amount of water in any given wetland during the growing season. Prescribed discharge of water (drawdowns) characterizes moist soil methodology. Drawdowns are based on ecological principles. They strive to mimic natural conditions that favor biological needs of plants useful for production of duck foods. The season of the year and the amount of time used to discharge water are important factors influencing the kind of success from drawdowns. Soil disturbance and control of undesirable plants are other important considerations.

Drawdowns are characterized as being early, mid-season or late. They are said to be early when they occur during the first six weeks of the growing season. In many cases, early drawdowns can begin in late January or during February. Beginning early drawdowns before the average calendar date of the last frost is not unreasonable. Because weather varies from year to year the average date is not highly reliable for scheduling early drawdowns. In some years soils warm substantially early in the year. Spring weather in other years can be cooler than normal. Annual decisions must be made according to local conditions at the site.

Mid-season drawdowns are scheduled during approximately the second six weeks of the growing season. Mid-season drawdowns begin in late March or through April. They should be complete by the end of spring. Late season drawdowns occur about four to six weeks prior to the end of summer. Late season drawdowns are used less frequently in Texas because pest plants can be encouraged during these periods of hot weather.

Drawdowns also are categorized as slow or fast. Slow drawdowns require three to four weeks for discharge of the desired amount of water. Fast drawdowns occur in a few days (e.g. three to five). As a rule, slow drawdowns are favored in moist management.

Different kinds of plants can be caused to grow in wetlands by employing various kinds of drawdown tactics. Generally, early slow drawdowns and mid-season slow drawdowns result in plant growth with the best production of seed attractive to ducks. Fast drawdowns seldom are used. Pink smartweed, a very desirable waterfowl food plant, prospers through use of early slow drawdowns. Barnyardgrass and Walter's millet respond well to mid-season slow drawdowns. These also are heavy producers of seeds readily eaten by ducks. Therefore, early and mid-season slow drawdowns are preferred for moist soil management for duck habitat.

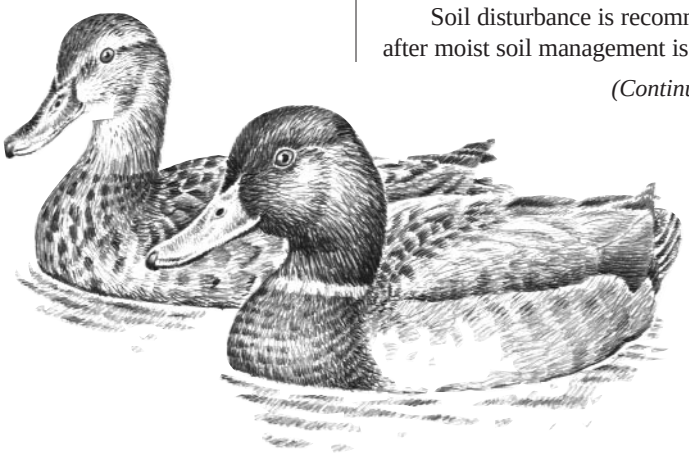
Late season drawdowns are difficult to regulate. Usually, they are undesirably fast because evapotranspiration rates are added to the structural discharge rates. (Evapotranspiration refers to water converted to vapor by heating and uptake by plants. In wetlands, evaporation occurs by heating from sunlight; transpiration occurs by water movement through plants.) Also, late season fast drawdowns can cause proliferation of pest plants such as cocklebur or sumpweed. However, sprangletop, a useful duck food, is produced by late drawdowns. In some cases, late season drawdowns are utilized to incrementally expose mudflats that serve as feeding for shorebirds on fall migration.

Water control devices are used to regulate the water levels and discharge rates. These devices come in various types. A flashboard (aka stoplog) riser is a type commonly used in moist soil management. This device consists of a metal upright riser box fitted with a rack or slots to hold a vertical series of boards or metal slats that affect the water level in the impoundment and the amount of water released during drawdowns. This riser box is attached to a pipe that passes through the levee impounding the unit. As boards are removed from the slots, more water can be discharged and less water is stored. During drawdowns, using thin wedges placed between the top two boards can slow the rate of discharge. Another method is to replace the wider top board with a more narrow top board. These methods are successively worked down the stack of boards in the riser until the desired drawdown level is reached.

Similarly, the boards are returned to the riser to refill the habitat compartment. By filling compartments in stages, the availability of foods is enhanced. New food supplies gradually are made available as additional boards are added to flood a larger area. This process is effective because ducks prefer to feed on seed flooded in the very shallow zone at the edge of the wetland pool.

Soil disturbance is recommended after moist soil management is practiced for

(Continued on page 7)



New Rules for Wildlife Management Adopted by Comptroller's Office

To address concerns with granting open-space land valuation when an owner uses the land for wildlife management, the Texas Legislature passed House Bill (H.B.) 3123 to develop state standards.

H.B. 3123 added Property Tax Code Section 23.521 that required the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department to develop standards for the qualification of open space land used for wildlife management. To do this, TPWD held a series of meetings with representatives of all major stakeholders groups. The new rules are the result of this cooperative effort among field biologists, private consultants, tax appraisers, agricultural groups, private landowners and wildlife co-op members.

Section 23.51(7) defines "wildlife management" as actively using land that at the time the wildlife-management use began was appraised as qualified open-space land in at least three of the following seven ways to propagate a sustaining breeding, migrating or wintering population of indigenous wild animals for human use, including food, medicine or recreation: habitat control, erosion control, predator control, providing supplemental supplies of water, providing supplemental supplies of food, providing shelter and conducting census counts to determine population.

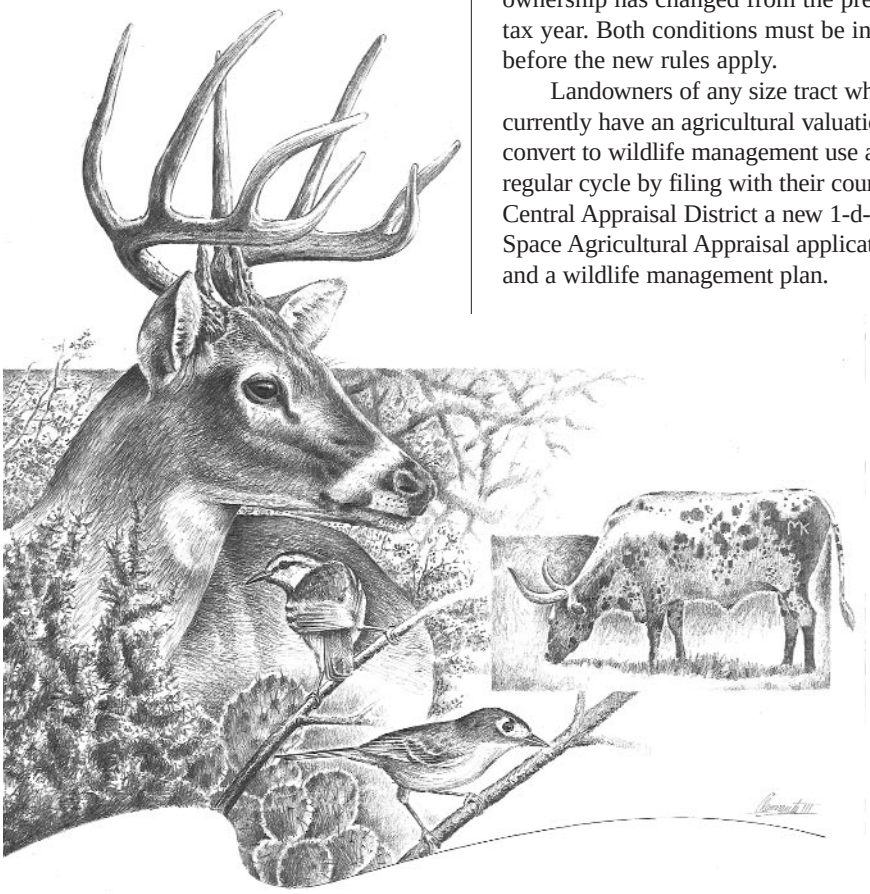
The standards also include uniform specifications for a written management plan to be developed by a landowner. These new "landowner-friendly" forms can be obtained from the TPWD Web site at www.tpwd.state.tx.us/conserve/agland/agland.htm and are effective for the 2002 tax year.

TPWD standards

Essentially the only new requirement for landowners already in wildlife is the requirement of a wildlife management plan. As most counties were already requiring this, most landowners will not notice any changes from the new rules.

The new rules apply only to tracts of land that have been partitioned out of a previously qualifying tract and for which ownership has changed from the previous tax year. Both conditions must be in place before the new rules apply.

Landowners of any size tract who currently have an agricultural valuation may convert to wildlife management use at any regular cycle by filing with their county Central Appraisal District a new 1-d-1 Open Space Agricultural Appraisal application and a wildlife management plan.



For those tracts of land that have had a change in ownership ***and*** been reduced in size, the county may designate a ratio that requires an area be devoted to wildlife management use.

The county selects the ratio based on the region in which the county is located. To determine the ratio, the total tract size minus one is divided by the total tract size.

For example, if a county chose 95%, and a landowner had a 20-acre tract of land appraised for agriculture, then the formula would look like this: 20-1=19. And 19 divided by 20 = .95 = 95%. So any property appraised for agriculture that is 20 acres or larger is able to convert to a wildlife valuation.

Every tract approved for wildlife management must have a wildlife management plan.

The county may designate a minimum ratio devoted to wildlife management use. It is important to emphase that these ratios *only affect properties that have been BOTH reduced in size and had a change in ownership since the previous tax year.*

In East Texas, the county shall select from a minimum of 92 percent (12.5 acres) to a maximum of 94 percent (16.6 acres).

In Central Texas, a minimum shall be 93 percent (14.3 acres) to a maximum of 95 percent (20 acres).

In South Texas, West Texas and the Panhandle of Texas, a minimum shall be 96 percent (25 acres) to a maximum of 98 percent (50 acres).

In the Trans-Pecos area, a minimum shall be 97 percent (33.3 acres) to a maximum of 99 percent (100 acres).

For example, a Central Texas county may select a ratio of 95 percent, resulting in a minimum size 20-acre tract to qualify. On the other hand, that county could select 93 percent, thus allowing a 14.3-acre tract to qualify. This would be up to the county and locally determined needs. Again, these ratios only apply to property that has been reduced in size ***and*** had a change in ownership.

The county appraisal district's board of directors in the county shall designate the selected ratio from the regional minimum and maximum.

Counties shall impose lower minimum ratio requirements for areas designated as wildlife property associations. In such areas, all properties within the area must have deed restrictions, property owner agreements or conservation easements adequately addressing compatible wildlife management activities. The

(Continued on page 5)

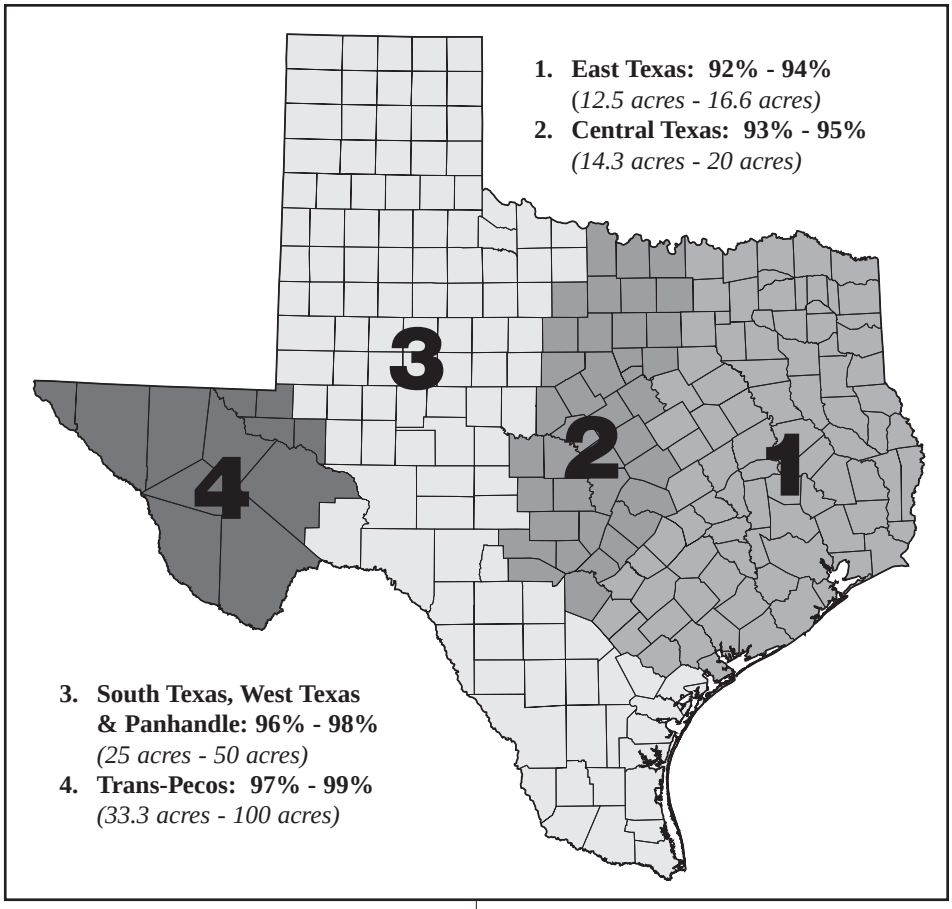
county will designate a ratio one or two percent below the minimum designated for the region.

For example, in Central Texas if the county selected from the regional list 95 percent (20 acres) to 93 percent (14.3 acres), the ratio for the wildlife property association would be one or two percent below the minimum of 93 percent for the region, so it would be designated by the county at 92 percent (12.5 acres) or 91 percent (11.1 acres).

Each tract within a wildlife property association must be performing three of the seven wildlife activities. Each tract must have a wildlife management plan; however, an overall plan for the association may suffice for general purposes, but activities performed on the tract must be identified and supported.

Counties shall address areas that have species of concern, such as candidate, threatened and endangered species, in the same method as the wildlife property association. The county shall impose lower minimum ratio requirements for areas designated as candidate, threatened or endangered species habitat if the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department has designated properties within the area and if landowners have targeted these species as part of their wildlife management plans. The county will designate a ratio one or two percent below the minimum designated for the region.

Should a tract of land appraised for agriculture not meet the new standards, the county may grant an exception if the landowner can provide "clear and convincing evidence" that the property is unique and wildlife management is possible on a smaller tract.



Counties shall "grandfather" existing tracts qualified for appraisal as wildlife management as of January 1, 2001 that may not meet these new standards selected by the counties as long as they continue to meet all other wildlife management requirements.

To address reporting concerns, counties now have a standardized reporting form to send out as it deems necessary, but no more than annually.

For those who are interested in reading the text of the new rule, refer to the Texas Register, July 5 edition.

Texas Accelerates Chronic Wasting Disease Planning

The discovery of Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) in a wild mule deer in southern New Mexico in June has lent new urgency to Texas plans to detect and control the illness that affects deer and elk, if and when it is found in Texas.

On June 17, tissue collected from a mule deer on the White Sands Missile Range tested positive for CWD, the first confirmed case in New Mexico.

"There is still no evidence that CWD is in Texas," said Robert L. Cook, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department executive director. "Our first priority is to try to keep it out of Texas. However, if it is found here, we plan to be able to detect and deal with it quickly."

"We are also ramping up a sustained public information campaign to inform Texas hunters and the general public about CWD," Cook added. "While the situation does require informed vigilance, Texans should look forward to a good hunting season this fall. Deer diseases have been around for a long time; we should not let this one compromise a centuries-old tradition in our state."

Texas has already suspended the importation of elk and several species of deer, and is working with deer breeders in the state to set up a voluntary monitoring program to test for the disease in private facilities.

This month officials began testing deer showing possible CWD symptoms, and TPWD is drafting a plan for its field employees to be on the lookout for deer exhibiting symptoms that meet the clinical profile of CWD and to start sampling hunter-killed deer on wildlife management areas and state parks this fall.

"The name Chronic Wasting Disease indicates animals wasting away, and that is typical of what you see with CWD-infected deer," said Gary Graham, Ph.D., TPWD wildlife division director. "But, just because an animal appears to be skinny or malnourished does not mean it has CWD – drought, overpopulation and other factors can produce the same appearance."

(Continued on back page)

New Special Antler Restrictions for Austin, Colorado, Fayette, Lavaca, Lee and Washington Counties

On April 4, 2002 the Texas Parks and Wildlife Commission approved a unique set of experimental regulations governing the harvest of buck deer for a six-county area of the Oak-Prairie Wildlife District. The experimental regulation will be in effect for the **2002**, **2003** and **2004** hunting seasons.

In **Austin**, **Colorado**, **Fayette**, **Lavaca**, **Lee** and **Washington** counties, hunters may harvest a buck only if it has a hardened antler protruding through the skin and meets ONE of the following criteria:

- *A deer having at least one unbranched antler.*
- *A deer having one antler with six or more points.*
- *A deer having an inside spread measurement between the main beams of 13 inches or greater.*

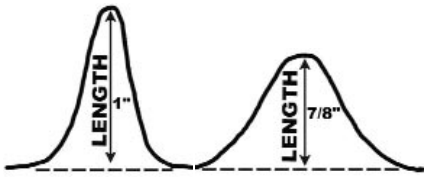
The regulation is designed to address intense hunting pressure on buck deer in the affected counties. In the relevant six counties, the average spread of a 3.5-year-old buck is 13 inches and the approximate distance between the tips of a buck deer's ears is 13 inches. The new regulation is expected to protect about 65 percent of the buck population the first year, allowing more deer to mature and thereby create a more balanced herd and higher quality hunting opportunity in future years. The experimental regulation will remain in effect for three years.

Data will be collected at volunteer check stations that will be set-up in each of the six counties involved. Each hunter that brings a legally harvested buck from one of the six counties to a check station will be registered in a drawing for one of several valuable prizes to be given away each year of the experimental regulation. The Grand Prize will be a lifetime hunting and fishing license donated by the Texas Sportsman Association.

Training sessions will be held to educate the general public on the new antler restriction regulation. These sessions will include information on how to judge the inside spread of bucks and distinguish between legal and illegal bucks under the new regulation. Training sessions will be held in each of the six affected counties during September.

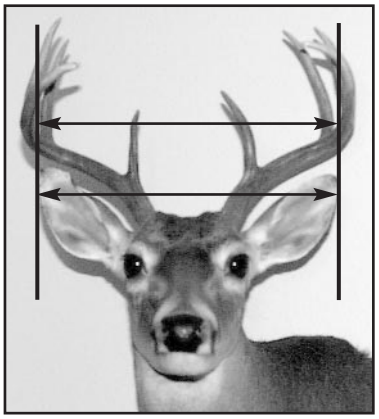
A legal buck deer in Austin, Colorado, Fayette, Lavaca, Lee and Washington counties is defined as having a hardened antler protruding through the skin **AND**:

- at least one unbranched antler; **OR**
- an inside spread measurement between main beams of 13 inches or greater; **OR**
- six points or more on one antler (a point is a projection that extends at least one inch from the edge of a main beam or another tine).



How do you determine if a buck has an inside spread measurement of 13 inches or greater?

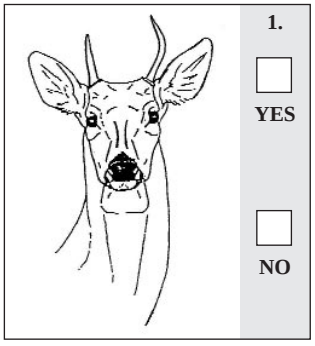
The distance from ear-tip to ear-tip on a buck with ears in the alert position measures approximately 13 inches.



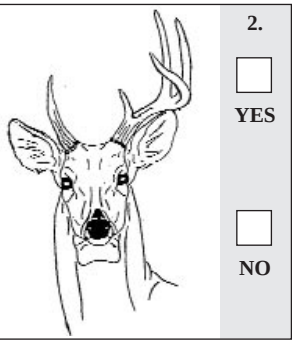
The inside spread on this buck is exactly 13 inches.

NOW IT'S YOUR TURN!

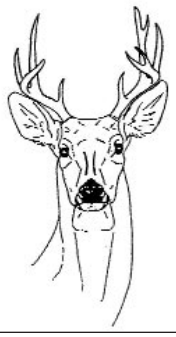
Look at each of the deer below. If you think the deer is a legal buck, check **YES**. If it is not a legal buck, check **NO**.



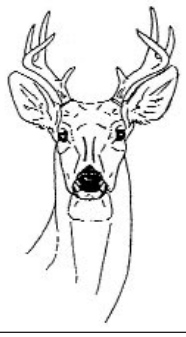
1. ☐ YES ☐ NO



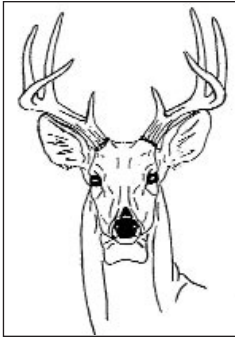
2. ☐ YES ☐ NO



3. ☐ YES ☐ NO



4. ☐ YES ☐ NO



5. ☐ YES ☐ NO

If you're satisfied with your answers, go to page 7 to find out how well you do.

Wildlife Regulations Bullets

2002-2003 Approved Hunting Season Dates

DOVE		
Mourning	North Zone[1]	Sept. 1-Oct. 30
	Central Zone[2]	Sept. 1-Oct. 29, Dec. 26-Jan. 5
	South Zone[2]	Sept. 20-Nov. 3, Dec. 21-Jan. 14
White-winged	Special South Texas Zone[3]	Sept. 7, 8, 14 & 15 Sept. 20-Nov. 3, Dec. 21-Jan. 10
TEAL-ONLY	**Statewide** (all counties)	Sept. 14-22
ALLIGATOR	by permit only	Sept. 10-30
PRONGHORN ANTELOPE		
	by permit only	Sept. 28-Oct. 6
WHITE-TAILED DEER		
	Archery	Sept. 28-Oct. 27
	General:	
	Special Youth Season[4]	Oct. 26-27
	North Texas (200 counties)	Nov. 2-Jan. 5
	Panhandle (6 counties)	Nov. 23-Dec. 8
	South Texas (29 counties)	Nov. 2-Jan. 19
	Edwards Plateau (25 counties)	
	Late Antlerless and Spike	Jan. 6-19
	South Texas (30 counties)	
	Late Antlerless and Spike	Jan. 20-Feb. 2
	Muzzleloader (19 counties)	
	Late Antlerless and Spike	Jan. 11-19
	Special Youth-Antlerless Only[5]	Jan. 18-19
MULE DEER	Archery	Sept. 28-Oct. 27
	General:	
	Panhandle (36 counties)	Nov. 23-Dec. 8
	SW Panhandle (7 counties)	Nov. 23-Dec. 1
	Trans-Pecos (19 counties)	Nov. 30-Dec. 15
JAVELINA	43 counties	Oct. 1-Feb. 23
	50 counties	Sept. 1-Aug. 31
SQUIRREL	**Special Youth Season**[6]	Sept. 28-29
	East Texas (51 counties)	Oct. 1-Feb. 2, May 1-31
	Remaining counties	Sept. 1-Aug. 31
LESSER PRAIRIE CHICKEN		
	Panhandle (8 counties) by permit	Oct. 19-20
PHEASANT	**Panhandle** (37 counties)	Dec. 14-29
	Coastal (7 counties)	Nov. 2-Feb. 23
QUAIL	**Statewide** (all counties)	Oct. 26-Feb. 23
RIO GRANDE TURKEY		
	Archery:	Sept. 28-Oct. 27
	Fall Season:	
	Special Youth Season[6]	Oct. 26-27, Jan. 18-19
	North Texas (119 counties)	Nov. 2-Jan. 5
	South Texas (25 counties)	Nov. 2-Jan. 19
	Brooks, Kenedy & Kleberg counties	Nov. 2-Feb. 23
	Spring Season:	
	North Texas (129 counties)	Apr. 5-May 11
	South Texas (32 counties)	Mar. 29-May 4
EASTERN TURKEY		
	Spring Season Only[7]	
	East Texas (32 counties)	Apr. 14-27
CHACHALACA	**Cameron, Hildago, Starr & Willacy counties**	Nov. 2-Feb. 23
RABBITS AND HARES		
	No closed season.	

1 15 bird/day bag limit.
2 12 bird/day bag limit.
3 Must have white-winged dove stamp or super-combo license.
4 In all counties that have an open season for those species.
5 In all counties where the general or special late seasons have closed before the dates indicated.
6 In all counties that have a Oct. 1-Feb. 2 and May 1-31 Open Squirrel Season.
7 Rio Grande and Eastern Turkey may be hunted in these counties.

Moist Soil Management… *(Continued from page 3)*

a few years in any given habitat compartment. Disking or plowing can serve to re-invigorate the kinds of plants that are annual seed-producers. These treatments occur after the drawdown allows the soil to dry sufficiently for equipment operation. Deep plowing also is used to destroy or damage stands of pest plants such as cattail, willow or American lotus (yonkapin).

When practicing moist soil management, an important point to remember is that wetlands are dynamic systems. The presence of water makes these important components of the landscape especially responsive to many factors that cause changes. Consequently, variation in management tactics is essential to maintain regular success. Therefore, moist soil management practices should be varied from year to year. This capability is improved where several waterfowl habitat compartments exist in proximity. Different techniques can be applied to the respective units to produce a diversity of habitats and maintain plant communities in various stages useful to waterfowl.

This dynamic approach to habitat manipulation is the essence of moist soil management. Furthermore, these techniques offer a potential solution to the problem of improving the quality of duck hunting in any given locale.

Answers to Deer Quiz:

1. *Legal* This buck has at least one unbranched antler.
2. *Legal* This buck has at least one unbranched antler.
3. *Legal* Six or more points on one side.
4. *Illegal* This buck meets none of the criteria.
5. *Legal* Inside spread of 13 inches or greater.

Texas Accelerates Chronic Wasting Disease Planning *(Continued from page 5)*

There is some good news from the Texas Animal Health Commission (TAHC), which for decades has tested imported livestock and game animals for diseases like brucellosis or tuberculosis. TAHC Veterinarian Kenneth Waldrup, Ph.D. said the Texas Veterinary Medical Diagnostic Lab in College Station got a grant last year for equipment to diagnose scrapie, a similar disease that affects sheep. Waldrup said the new gear also works to test for CWD, and the lab is now certified by the U.S. Department of Agriculture to be able to process CWD samples. Officials say the Texas lab should soon be able to handle more than 500 samples per week, with the ability to confirm or deny the presence of CWD in a particular sample within three days.

After the discovery of CWD, New Mexico officials promptly closed the state to any importation of deer or elk. Texas took a proactive step, and since March 11 has suspended the importation of elk, mule deer and white-tailed and black-tailed deer. Dozens of other states have taken similar action. CWD outbreaks in free-ranging deer have been detected in Colorado, Nebraska, New Mexico, South Dakota, Wisconsin, Wyoming and the Canadian province of Saskatchewan. As a preemptive measure, New Mexico officials said they may consider regulations to restrict the importation of sport-harvested deer or elk, when nearly all other states are focusing on restricting the importation of live, captive-raised deer for breeding facilities.

CWD is in the family of diseases called transmissible spongiform encephalopathies (TSE). The disease is found in infected animals' neural tissue such as brains and spinal cords, as well as eyes and lymph nodes. The TSE in domestic sheep is called scrapie, and in cattle it's bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE). Similar diseases in humans include Creuzfeldt-Jacobs Disease (CJD) and its new variant, kuru and fatal familial insomnia. CWD should not be confused with BSE, scrapie or CJD.

The World Health Organization (WHO) has said there is no scientific evidence CWD can infect humans. (After more than 16 years of monitoring in the affected area in Colorado, no disease has been detected in people or cattle living there.) However, the WHO also says no people or animals should consume any part of potentially CWD-infected deer or elk. Hunters are advised to wear latex gloves when field dressing game, to de-bone all meat and avoid consuming any neural tissue, such as brain or spinal cords of animals.

With approximately four million animals, Texas has the largest population of white-tailed deer in the nation. In addition, about 19,000 white-tailed deer and 17,000 elk are being held in private facilities. To know if CWD is present in captive herds, TPWD and Texas Animal Health Commission are working with breeders to voluntarily monitor their herds.

In accordance with Texas State Depository Law, this publication is available at the Texas State Publications Clearinghouse and/or Texas Depository Libraries.

PWD BR W7100–191 (10/02)

Texas Parks and Wildlife Department
4200 Smith School Road
Austin, Texas 78744