



LEE COUNTY WILDLIFE ASSOCIATION

July 2012

leecountywildlife.org

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Wildlife Biologist

Texas Parks and Wildlife

979-540-2744

Victor Gonzales

Game Warden

Texas Parks and Wildlife

979-540-0194

Keeton Ehrig

County Extension Agent

Agriculture/Natural Resources

979-542-2753



Hot Weather Has Arrived

July in Texas. The heat has arrived. At least we are better off than we were last year. With-in the next few weeks most of the fawns will be on the ground, most of the birds will be done nesting for the season and bucks are growing their antlers for this year. As the days get hotter, food for deer can start getting a little harder to find. So keeping protein out at this time of year is probably a good idea to help with lactating does and antler growth.

Everyone should put up pens around deer feeders to exclude pigs from getting an easy meal. A fence between 24 and 30 inches tall will do

the job but still allow the deer to come and go.

I know that the weeds are looking pretty bad out there, but please leave the shredder parked for a little while longer. Hold off until the fawns are up and moving with their mothers, tolerate the jungle until the end of July.

The hot weather can also be tough on your fish, causing low oxygen levels and fish kills. You might want to stop feeding catfish due to the increased nutrient loads which can further decrease the oxygen content in the water.

Pig Pressure

In case you missed it, we had a week long pig contest that was held in the county back in April. I was hoping for more teams of up to four people would have entered it. The cost was \$150 per team plus a \$50 side pot for heaviest sow and boar. The rules were the pigs could be taken by any legal means during the contest period and the pigs had to be taken from inside Lee County. The prize money was awarded to the top three teams with the most pigs and the side pot money to the teams taking the heaviest boar and the heaviest sow. Only 8 teams entered but they still managed to kill a little over 200 pigs in 7 days. I know of other trappers that did not enter that also removed a considerable number that same week.

Keep in mind that you need to remove around 70% of a pig population just to keep it from getting bigger!

I hope we can have more of these contests or other ways of encouraging people to keep pressure on pig numbers. If you have pigs on your property but do not have the time or means to remove them, please let me know. I bet we can find someone to help with that problem.

Like deer, pigs will be looking for food sources as temperatures rise making baiting more enticing. I know that box traps are convenient to use but please do all you can to avoid trapping deer. Using fermented/stinky corn can reduce it's attractiveness to deer, otherwise use traps with an open top so deer can jump out.

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Tim Walther
 Branch President



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TO RECEIVE DOE PERMITS PLEASE COMPLETE THIS PORTION OF THE FORM ALONG WITH YOUR HERD COMPOSITION DATA ON THE REVERSE SIDE OF THIS FORM

☐ I did not receive permits last year.

☐ I received permits last year using the TWIMS system but my contact information has changed

☐ I received permits last year and my contact information has not changed

☐ Other problem (describe): _____

Your Name: _____ Property Name: _____

Wildlife Management Association: _____

Requesters Mailing Address (road, city, zip): _____

Address of property permits are being requested for: _____

Phone Numbers: _____

E-mail: _____ Number of acres in the tract requesting permits: _____

HERD COMPOSITION DATA

Herd composition data (often called incidental observations) may be the most valuable data collected on a deer herd. When properly collected, herd composition data can reflect the overall health of a herd and help guide the manager in making proper harvest recommendations.

Herd composition data should be collected between August 1 and September 15

The fawns have become a part of the herd by this time, yet they are small enough to be easily distinguished from adult deer. Observations outside this period may result in inaccurate data. Observations may be collected any time during the day. However, the first and last hours of daylight are often the most productive.

All deer recorded must be viewed through binoculars or a spotting scope

Small antlers are easily overlooked without optical aids. Fawns whose spots have started to fade are also hard to distinguish when they are observed alone. Be sure to look at the hips of deer that you think could possibly be fawns because the hips are the last place to lose spots.

Ideally, a minimum of 150 deer should be identified

If possible, a larger sample size is desirable to strengthen the data and increase the confidence in the harvest recommendations. Observations can be made during routine ranch operations or as a special effort. On smaller ranches (<300 acres), it may not be feasible to obtain 150 deer observations, but efforts should be made to get **at least 50**. Members of **Wildlife Management Associations** should get at least 30 deer observations for ranches <300 acres and 50-100 deer observations for ranches >300 acres. Observing the same deer recorded on a previous count is not a concern. If a conscientious effort is made to record accurate data, a small amount of duplicate recording should not affect the ratios. All deer should be recorded as a buck, doe, or fawn. Recording bucks according to number of antler points is also beneficial. The occurrence of inferior animals versus multi point animals can be used to measure progress in the quality of the deer herd over time.

Submit data by SEPTEMBER 15 to
Greg Pleasant
Texas Parks & Wildlife Department
200 S Main - 203A
Giddings TX 78942
979-540-2744

HERD COMPOSITION / INCIDENTAL OBSERVATIONS

If you are requesting doe permits please complete the form on reverse side in addition

Ranch Name: _____ County: Lee Year: 2012

Observer: _____ Property Owner: _____

**Your Wildlife Management
Association (CIRCLE ONE) →**

Two Creeks

South Lee

West Yegua

East Yegua

Blue Branch

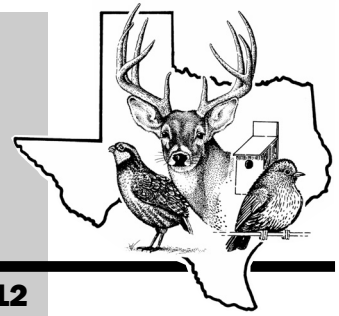
PLEASE MAKE SURE TO TOTAL THE NUMBERS AT THE BOTTOM!

Date	2-3 Point Bucks	4-7 Point Bucks	8+ Point Bucks	Undetermined Bucks	Does	Fawns	Comments
8/4	II	IIII	I	II	IIII III III	IIII I	Example
TOTAL							

OAK-PRAIRIE WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATIONS

WILDLIFE NEWS

July 2012

**THE NEED FOR DEER CHECK STATION DATA***Bobby Eichler, Technical Guidance Biologist, La Grange*

This past hunting season, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) began operating seventeen voluntary hunter check stations across the “original” six counties that implemented the antler restriction regulation in Texas back in 2002. These counties were Austin, Colorado, Fayette, Lavaca, Lee and Washington. Some may recall the voluntary hunter check stations in these counties and that data was collected for the first six hunting seasons (2002 through 2007) in which the antler restriction regulation began. From 2008 through 2010, the department took a three-year hiatus from operating the check stations. The original plan was to collect deer age and antler data in three-year increments to detect trends in antler mass and to monitor the age structure of the buck segment. This past year was the beginning year in another three-year data collection period (2011 through 2013) in which biologists would like to collect age and antler data on bucks harvested in the six “original” counties.

The data collected at these hunter check stations is important to monitor the deer herd and impacts the antler restriction regulation is having on the buck segment. The antler restriction regulation is now the law in 117 counties basically covering the eastern third of Texas. These six “original” counties have been operating under this regulation for the longest in the state, so we have a unique set of age and antler data.

This past hunting season, TPWD attempted to replicate the data collection process used in the first six years of data collection. The number of deer recorded at the check stations for the 2011-2012 hunting season was low when compared to past collection periods. Only 374 deer were brought to hunter check stations across the six counties (see Table 1). In the period from 2002 through 2007, the number of deer brought into check stations ranged from a low of 627 (initial year of the antler restriction regulation) to a high of 938. In the past, the number of deer brought to check stations ‘mirrored’ the total harvest as reported by the TPWD’s Big Game Hunter Harvest Survey. Basically this indicated that during years when habitat conditions

were good, such as the 2007–08 season, hunters harvested less deer than average and less deer were brought to check stations. The opposite occurs during years when habitat conditions are poor, such as the 2006–07 season, when hunters harvested more deer than average and also brought more deer to the check stations.

TABLE 1:
Number of deer recorded at Texas Parks and Wildlife check stations within the original six antler regulation counties. Check stations were not conducted during the hunting seasons of 2008, 2009 and 2010.

Season	County						Total
	Austin	Colorado	Fayette	Lee	Lavaca	Washington	
2002-03	32	238	137	58	156	30	651
2003-04	49	291	172	101	214	53	880
2004-05	53	209	166	88	105	45	666
2005-06	82	308	218	129	97	37	871
2006-07	61	396	186	117	139	39	938
2007-08	35	215	161	117	71	28	627
2011-12	20	75	113	47	70	49	374
Total	332	1732	1153	657	852	281	5007

TPWD feels there may be a couple of factors causing a reduced participation in the hunter check stations. The most obvious is likely the fact that check stations were not conducted during the preceding 3 seasons. Hunters basically did not know about the check stations. Hopefully with more awareness, this will remedy itself. TPWD plans on advertising and getting the word out more this coming year through newspapers, radios, and posters.

Another issue may be local buck contests held within the counties. Several of the six counties and associated Wildlife Management Associations now have buck contests for both trophy bucks and cull bucks. While these contests are a great idea, hunters may not be willing to have a deer measured for a buck competition, and then spend extra time going to a TPWD check station. TPWD has also been hesitant about collecting data from bucks entered into

(Continued on page 2)

competitions for fear of biasing the data. However, it appears that we are missing collecting data on a significant number of bucks being harvested. TPWD is going to work with the local Associations and interested people to create a certification process for those scoring and ageing bucks brought to contests, so that data can be used in the TPWD data set. Hopefully, this creates a “one stop shopping” approach, so that hunters can more easily get their data collected.

Please remember this coming year to either bring your harvested buck to one of your local voluntary check stations or make sure that data is being collected on that deer and going to TPWD. We will continue to advertise and remind people to get their bucks scored and aged. We would like any harvested buck to be recorded, regardless of size.

TEN YEARS OF ANTLER REGULATIONS

Bobby Eichler, Technical Guidance Biologist, La Grange

The 2011 – 2012 season marks the tenth year that antler regulations have been in place in Austin, Colorado, Fayette, Lavaca, Lee, and Washington counties. Most hunters and landowners within this area are quite familiar with the history behind the regulations, but so everyone is on the same page, I will give a quick summary.

Prior to 2002, immature bucks were a large proportion of the buck harvest across this district. The hunter bag limit in these counties was one buck and tremendous pressure was put on bucks by the many hunters across a landscape dominated by small properties. Typically, 80% of the annual buck harvest consisted of bucks 2½ years old or younger, with very few bucks making it to maturity.

With the support of local landowners and wildlife management associations, an experimental regulation was established with two primary objectives; 1) to improve the age structure of the buck herd, and 2) to improve hunter opportunity. The new antler regulation defined a legal buck as either having, 1) an inside spread greater than 13 inches, 2) at least one unbranched antler, or 3) at least 6 points on one side. These regulations took effect in 2002 and the counties remained one buck counties.

After three seasons an improvement was seen in most aspects of the regulation. Buck age structure did improve and hunter opportunity did not suffer. There was one trend detected though that was not favorable; as buck age structure and antler quality began to increase hunters

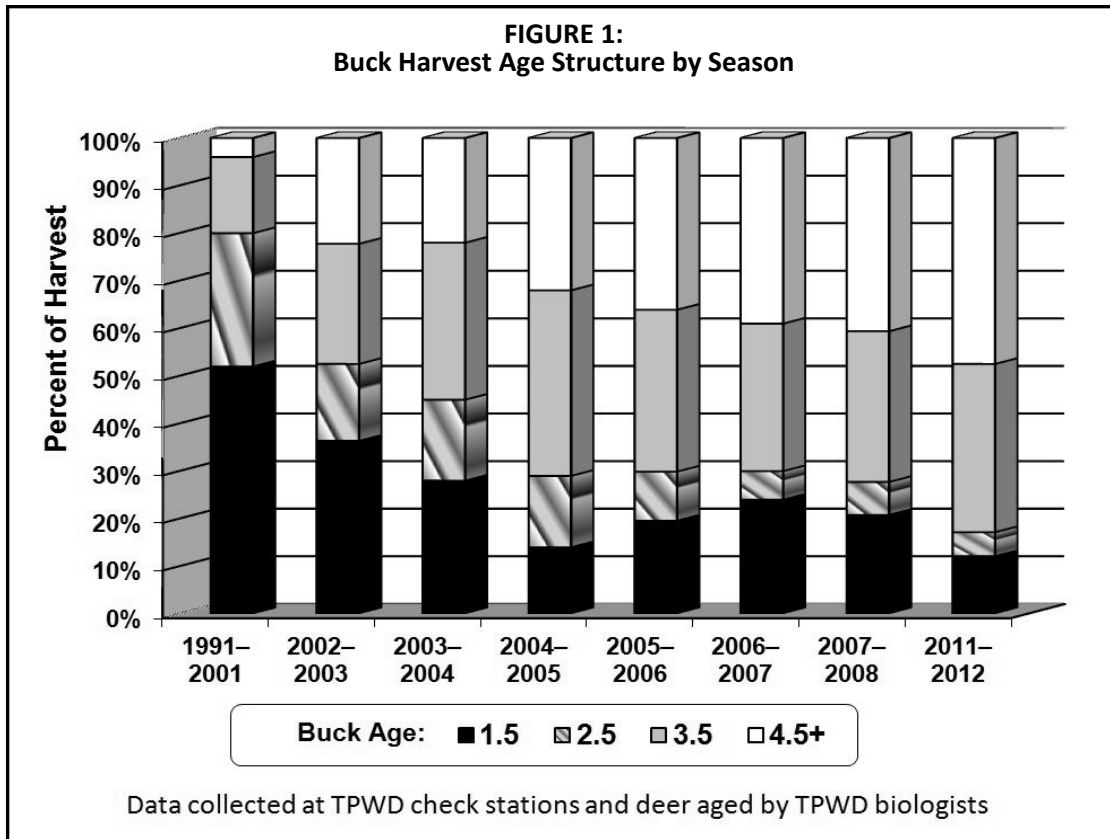
stopped shooting the unbranched portion of the herd and focused on the 13-inch and better portion. This can be seen in the decline of 1½ year old bucks during the seasons of 2002 through 2004 (see Figure 1 on the opposite page).

During 2005, the regulation was extended and changed slightly. The parameter for bucks to have 6 points on one side was removed from the regulation due to the very small number of bucks that met the criteria. More importantly, in order to not protect un-branched antlered bucks, county bag limits were bumped to 2 bucks of which only 1 buck could have a spread greater than 13 inches. This gave hunters an opportunity to harvest bucks with unbranched antlers without ‘burning a tag’. The removal of unbranched bucks was supported by previous TPWD research at the Kerr Wildlife Management Association (http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/publications/pwdpubs/media/pwd_rp_w7000_0827.pdf).

Well, now ten years after antler regulations have been in place, the overall age structure of the harvest has improved greatly, which has in turn improved the age structure of the standing herd. Take a look at Figure 1 (on page 3) and you can detect some major shifts:

- Prior to the regulation, 80% of the harvest was bucks less than 2½ years old
- Early in the regulation, by 2004, approximately 29% of the harvest was less than 2½ years old while 71% of the harvest was 3½ years or older
- From 2005 through 2007, the harvest of 3½ year old bucks stayed steady at 68-73% of the harvest with the 4½ year old and older class making up 35-41% of the harvest
- During the collection period representing 2011, bucks 4½ years and older jumped to 47% of the harvest
- Generally, as the regulation goes on, we are seeing a steady increase in the number of 4½, 5½, and 6½ year old age classes in the harvest

Overall, the age structure of the harvest and the buck herd has increased. As far as increasing hunter opportunity, the annual TPWD Big Game Hunter Harvest Survey has shown that the numbers of bucks harvested annually across each of the six counties has trended higher than during the pre-regulation period. There are still some low years and some high years, but that is hunting.



TWO NEW BIOLOGISTS FOR DISTRICT 7

For the first time since late 2009, District 7 is fully staffed. On June 1, 2012 two new biologists started duties in Austin, Colorado, Lavaca, and Jackson Counties. We would like to thank all the folks in these respective counties for having patience and working with District staff over the past months while they were without a local biologist.

Doug Jobs is the new biologist for Lavaca and Jackson Counties. Doug is a native of east-central Georgia and grew up on a small farm. Doug has served in the United States Army with the 1st Ranger Battalion 75th Ranger Regiment. Afterwards Doug earned a Bachelor's of Science Degree in Wildlife Management from the University of Georgia in 2008. Having an interest in quail management, Doug then achieved a Master's degree from Oklahoma State University in Wildlife Ecology and Management. Doug brings to the district experience with agriculture, quail management, and prescribed burning.

Doug will be residing in Hallettsville with his wife and three children.

Mark Lange is the new biologist for Austin and Colorado Counties. Mark is a native of the Texas Panhandle and completed his Bachelor's degree at West Texas A&M University in 2006 and his Master's degree in 2011 also at West Texas A&M University. Growing up in the Panhandle, Mark has a passion for waterfowl, upland birds, and large game management and hunting. As a hobby, Mark and his wife train German shorthair pointers for field trial competitions. Mark conducted his Master's research on aquatic vertebrate with a focus on freshwater turtles and fish. Mark is well rounded in the management of both game and non-game species and will benefit our district with this knowledge.

Mark and his wife Rachel will reside in the Columbus area.

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These must be sent to YOUR OWN LOCAL
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WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATIONS IN THE OAK-PRAIRIE DISTRICT

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Cat Spring WMA

BASTROP COUNTY

Alum Creek WMA
Bartons Creek WMA
Paint Creek WMA
Pin Oak Creek WMA
Red Rock WMA

CALDWELL COUNTY

Clear Fork Creek WMA
Tri-Community WMA

COLORADO COUNTY

Central Colorado County WMA
Colorado River WMA
Harvey Creek WMA
Northeast Colorado County WMA
Oakridge Ranch WMA
Sandy Creek WMA

DEWITT COUNTY

Central DeWitt County WMA
Meyersville WMA
Western DeWitt County WMA

FAYETTE COUNTY

Buckners Creek WMA
Colorado River WMA
Cummins Creek WMA
East Navidad WMA
North Central Fayette County WMA
Rabbs Creek WMA
West Navidad WMA

FORT BEND COUNTY

Thompsons Bottom WMA

GOLIAD COUNTY

Goliad County WMA

GONZALES COUNTY

Belmont WMA
Hamon River Bottom WMA
Northeast Gonzales County WMA
Salt Flat WMA
San Marcos River WMA
Sandies Creek WMA

GUADALUPE COUNTY

Guadalupe County WMA

JACKSON COUNTY

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