



This gargantuan rattler was killed on a ranch outside of Coleman. The man holding the snake stands 6'-2".

**Hunters, Anglers share traditions with youth**

In recent surveys conducted on HunterSurvey.com, ShooterSurvey.com and AnglerSurvey.com, responses revealed sportsmen overwhelmingly take the time to introduce kids to the joys of hunting and fishing. Asked if in the past 12 months they had taken a child hunting or fishing, just over 45 percent of hunters said they had taken a son, daughter, nephew, niece or other young person hunting, while a whopping 61 percent of fishermen said they had taken a child fishing.

While the relation of the child to the angler would be assumed to most often be a son or a daughter, that is the case only half of the time. The survey revealed 30 percent were nephews, nieces or another young relative; 15 percent were an unrelated child and 4 percent was as part of an outing with a Boy Scout troop, church group or other youth organization.

Where hunting was concerned, the relation of the child to the hunter was a son or a daughter 54 percent of the time. The survey revealed 29 percent were nephews, nieces or another young relative; 14 percent were an unrelated child and 4 percent were as part of an outing with a Boy Scout troop, church group or other youth organization.

"These numbers certainly boost the future of hunting, fishing and conservation as more young people are introduced to and learn the joys of these sports," said Rob Southwick, president of Southwick Associates, which designs and conducts the surveys at HunterSurvey.com, ShooterSurvey.com and AnglerSurvey.com. "While every child taken hunting or

government fisheries and wildlife officials and conservation organizations track consumer activities and expenditure trends. The information above represents only a small sample of the vast amount of data collected from the complete survey results and available to government agencies, businesses, the media and other interested parties. Results are scientifically analyzed to reflect the attitudes and habits of anglers and hunters across the United States. Find them on Facebook at <http://facebook.com/huntersurvey> and <http://facebook.com/anglersurvey>.

**Wildlife officials urge deer hunters to manage herds during drought**

Mired in what will undoubtedly be one of the worst droughts on record, white-tailed deer in Texas are facing tough conditions heading into the fall hunting season.

"It doesn't take a biologist to understand that drought has serious impacts on the state's nearly 4 million white-tailed deer," said Alan Cain, deer program leader with the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. "Everything from antler quality, to fawn production and overall survival will be affected by the tough range conditions this year."

Food and water sources for wildlife continue to shrink on a landscape-wide level and to help ensure enough resources are available through the winter months, biologists are encouraging hunters to increase deer harvest early in the hunting season.

The Texas deer hunting season opens Saturday, Oct. 1, for bowhunting and Nov. 5 for the general gun season. A

special youth-only weekend season is set for Oct. 29-30. The general season runs through Jan. 1, 2012 in North Texas and Jan. 15, 2012 in South Texas. A late youth-only season is also slated for Jan. 2-15, 2012. For additional late season deer hunting opportunities, consult the 2011-12 Outdoor Annual of hunting and fishing regulations.

"By reducing deer numbers early on, hunters can help ensure enough groceries will be available through the winter months," Cain said. "As with many wildlife species the very young and the very old often have much more difficult times dealing with extreme weather events." These stress periods are a way for nature to 'thin the herd,' especially in areas where deer populations are already exceeding the carrying capacity of the native range. As deer become stressed they are more susceptible to infections or other disease. Drought like this can be a contributing factor towards stress."

Cain said that isolated incidents of deer die-offs as a result of the drought are possible, but anything on a large scale isn't likely even if dry conditions continue. "Keep in mind deer have survived through some pretty tough times including the drought of the 1950s," he said.

The one positive aspect to the drought, Cain noted, is that deer may be more visible to hunters as they seek out water sources and feeders. Last year, Texas hunters harvested a record 688,000 deer and Cain predicted that record could be topped this year if conditions stay the same.

Atop every hunter's mind this year is how antlers will be affected by the drought,

said Cain. The 2011 season will pale in comparison to last season when two state record whitetails were harvested.

"Hunters can expect antler quality to be below average and much lower than last year," Cain said. "However, that's not to say there aren't some good bucks out in the woods this year. Those ranches managing habitat properly, keeping deer populations in check and maybe providing a little supplemental feed will not see as large a decrease in antler quality as other places not actively managing habitat."

By managing habitat properly, many ranches can moderate some of the effects of drought on antler quality. Any buck with a good set of antlers this year is one that has great potential, Cain added, especially a young buck, and hunters may consider passing up that type of deer.

"Just think if a buck can grow a good set of antlers on the native range under these conditions what he could do during a good year," he said.

Hunters should see a good number of 1 1/2-year-old bucks as many areas of the state experienced good fawn production in 2010 and those buck fawns from last year will now be sporting their first set of antlers this fall. In addition, 2005 was a good fawn production year based on surveys conducted by TPWD wildlife biologists, and those 2005 buck fawns are now 6 1/2 years old. Hopefully, a number of these mature bucks will show up in the harvest this year.

As for recruitment, Cain indicated fawn production doesn't look promising this year. In many areas it is likely to be below 20 percent and in single digits for some of the most drought-stricken regions of the state.

"Fawns are susceptible to

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