

Odd and Ends

By Johnny Kirby

Here are a few random ramblings that I hope you find interesting .

I'm not trying to seem negative but sometimes you have to question methods of choice...California now has a horse-mounted patrol unit as part of the California Department of Fish and Wildlife. This is apparently an attempt to control poaching in areas not easily accessible by other means. It seems to me that 4-wheelers and ATV's might be a more viable way to patrol these areas. I doubt the *poachers* will be on foot or horseback, however it's California, so nothing surprises me.

Several exclusive areas of Long Island, New York, are experiencing major deer problems. Over population of animals in non-hunting areas is nothing unusual. The deer are eating the yards and flowerbeds. One community tried to allow archery hunters to harvest animals, but the numbers taken was not significant enough to matter. Also many in the community objected to this "Inhumane way of killing deer."The plan now is to trap and surgically sterilize the deer and release them back into the community. The cost of this project is set at \$1,000 per deer per surgery. Are the landowners or the state paying for this project??? I'm not too smart but it seems to me that once you have them trapped it would be much easier to relocate them like other communities do.

And by the way, the report we gave you last year in this Hunting Guide about the Scimitar Horned Oryx being placed on the endangered species list has taken a strange turn. The restrictions on hunting them has been relaxed, even though they are still on the endangered list. We can now harvest them without having to apply for a permit from the federal government. I guess common sense does prevail. The Oryx were doing great in Texas as long as the animal activists stayed out of the picture.

Texas Lesser Prairie-Chicken Landowner Agreements Reach Record 600,000 Acres

Eighty-four Texas ranchers in the Panhandle and Rolling Plains have voluntarily enrolled 614,250 acres in conservation agreements for the lesser prairie-chicken, marking one of the largest private landowner commitment to conserve a rare species in Texas history. This comes as the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service mulls whether to list the bird under the Endangered Species Act, a decision expected by March 31.

Back in November 2006, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department signed a Candidate Conservation Agreement with Assurances (CCAA) with the federal wildlife agency. At the time, the bird was a candidate for listing. Yet for several years after the agreement was developed, few landowners

signed on. Then, after the USFWS proposed listing the bird as threatened in late 2012, enrollment surged.

By undertaking voluntary conservation measures on their property under the agreement, landowners are assured that no further land use restrictions or conditions will be required from them if the lesser prairie-chicken is ultimately listed. In return, landowners undertake conservation actions such as brush control, grazing management, prescribed burning, and allowing periodic monitoring on their property.

"Prairie-chicken conservation equals grassland conservation," said Calvin Richardson, TPWD Wildlife Division district leader, based in Canyon. "Landowners who provide good habitat for this bird are helping many other grassland-dependent species, such as pronghorn antelope and many grassland birds. Further, prairie conservation equals water conservation. Restoring and managing the native grasslands of the Texas Panhandle, including regions with Playa Lakes, can help provide vital recharge sources for the Ogallala Aquifer."

Department biologists also said the improvement in rangeland health that results from CCAA management also benefits cattle operations with conservative stocking rates that ensure good plant health, productivity, and a cushion in an unpredictable weather environment.

For more information about the Texas lesser prairie-chicken CCAA, and other available conservation tools for farmers, ranchers and other landowners, contact: Calvin Richardson, calvin.richardson@tpwd.texas.gov, (806) 651-3014.

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