

Fall hunting season is upon us

By Hal Spain

Once again hunting season is here, with archery season having been going on since September 27. Seems like it gets earlier every year. We don't get too involved in early bow season cause it seems like it's too hot to hunt a deer, when it's 95 degrees outside. However, the nights have been cooling off lately (43 degrees last night - Oct. 14th); so it won't be long till the bucks are rutting. I have already been seeing more does coming to feed with the cooler weather.

We are pretty optimistic about the upcoming season. The reason for this always goes back to our weather and range conditions, which are the prime factors in determining our abundance of game. We have not had a really wet year here in Coke County, but the rains that have fallen have been timely and have greatly improved our range conditions. In addition, we had a bunch of wheat sowed around the first of October that has just gotten from 1 to 2 inches of moisture as of last weekend (October 10-13).

A pretty darn good dove season is coming to an end on October 20th, with lots of white winged and collared doves in the mix and not as many mourning doves as we would expect. I heard a lot of shotgun blasts during the season, including some of my own. And, in most cases, it would sound like there was a war going on; so I am confident that most of our dove hunters had some success.

As a final note to dove season, we had our annual hunt at Haskell, Texas, on Labor Day, with about twelve of us taking more birds than we wanted to clean. The whitewings were

coming in droves at times that morning. Once again, not many of those birds were mourning doves, either. Most everybody would say that was too early in the season for the mourning dove migration south. But I never saw that many mourning doves all season. Let me know what your dove hunting experiences were, and we'll compare notes. We may be on to something here.

Let's talk turkey and quail next. We are seeing quail all over the county, which is a good thing. I hope their numbers have improved substantially since the wildfires and drought of 2011, a year we would just as soon forget. I have talked to a couple of landowners who have seen some young turkeys this year, but I haven't seen any myself.

The bottom line is that although the quail population is improving, in most cases I don't see any need to get your birddog out of the pen yet, unless he needs some exercise. We are excited about our increased quail numbers; however, I don't think we have huntable numbers yet, in most cases.

I don't know if we'll have a record deer season, but if we don't, it won't be from a lack of numbers. Local deer populations are healthy and making a good comeback from the drought and fires of 2011. I don't know what the horn (antler) situation will be this year in most areas, but we ought to have some really big bucks in management areas where they care about antler size and development. I think I can guarantee that you will see some really big horns from these areas.

As to seasons, dove season runs through October 20, 2014. The winter short seasons runs from Dec 19, 2014 through January 7, 2015, with a daily bag



Monster Buck! Roy Reid of Andrews, Texas, shown above with this monster whitetail buck, arrived at B&K Processing in Bronte just before lunch Saturday, November 2, 2013. He and Clark Bagley, also of Andrews, brought in a whole pickup load of trophy deer. The assortment of trophies included whitetails, axis, and black buck. The bucks were taken from the Triple P Game Ranch east of Abilene, Texas, operated by Jim and Stan Payne. The original genetics of these trophy deer were started by Chip Wayne on a ranch east of Sweetwater, Texas. The big buck pictured boasted 17 points and a B&C green score of 215.

limit of 15 in the central zone, which includes Coke County.

Archery season for deer and turkey will close on October 31, 2014, with no antlerless permit required except on MLD properties. The general deer and turkey season will run from

November 1, 2014, through January 4, 2015. The special late general season will run from January 5 - 18, 2015, for antlerless and spike bucks only. The bag limit for deer is 5, with no more than 2 bucks, all seasons combined.

Turkey season will run concurrently with deer season, November 1, 2014 through January 4, 2015. Spring turkey season has been set for April 4 through May 17, 2015, gobblers or bearded hens only, with a bag limit of 4 (all seasons combined).

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