

Fall hunting season is upon us

By Hal Spain

Last year at this time we were talking about the flooding that had occurred in Coke County just prior to hunting season. We recorded from 20 up to 27 inches of rainfall last year from the latter part of August through mid-October.

This year has been the exact opposite situation. Following a record rainfall event from last fall through June of this year, Mother Nature just decided we had enough of the wet stuff and cut us off – completely. I registered 1.64 inches for the third quarter of 2019, and I've talked to others who only totaled .2 inches for the whole quarter.

What does that mean to our wildlife situation? For one thing, you're not going to have to worry about deer not coming to feeders this fall. This year you may have to get out of their way to keep from getting run over. Another negative thought is that we were seeing does with twins as a rule this spring. I don't know how many of those fawns got kicked off in order for mother to survive the three months of 100 degree temps from July through September. I've not seen many horns (antlers) so far this fall, and I sure haven't seen many big racks, but I'm sure that they're out there – just not in the numbers we have experienced in the past. Winter wheat grazing which is always a staple for our deer herd is non-existent this year so far, as it has been too dry for farmers to think about sowing any wheat just yet. If we get some rain pretty soon, we might have some wheat grazing toward the latter part of the season, maybe. One bit of good news is that temperatures have begun cooling off recently; so we might get a rut going before

too late in this year's deer season.

We should have plenty of adult turkeys for this season, although I don't know how many of the young poults survived the summer heat. As for quail, our outlook is pretty dismal for the most part. Populations have not recovered from last year's die-off, and this summer's conditions were not what you would call anywhere near favorable. Roadside and helicopter counts have also not been encouraging.

As to seasons, we are at the tail end of a dove season that has not produced many dove at all for the freezer. Parks and Wildlife was predicting a banner dove season, while in reality it has been pretty much a bust throughout our area and across the Rolling Plains, where hunters usually have some really good early hunts. In our dove hunting zone in Coke County (Central Zone), the regular season will end November 3, 2019, with the late winter season set for December 20 through January 14, 2020. Daily bag limits for dove are 15, with the possession limit set at three times the daily limit or 45.

Archery season for deer and turkey will close on November 1, 2019, with no antlerless permit required except on MLD properties. The general deer and turkey season will run from November 2, 2019 through January 5, 2020. The special late general season will run from January 6 - 19, 2020, 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 2, 2019 through January 5, 2020. Spring turkey

season has been set for April 4 through May 17, 2020, gobblers or bearded hens only, with a bag limit of 4 (all seasons combined).

Quail season will run statewide October 26, 2019 through February 23, 2020, with a daily bag limit of 15 and a possession limit of 45.

Legal shooting hours for all game animals and nonmigratory game birds are from one-half hour before sunrise to one-half hour after sunset.

Hunters are reminded that licenses are on sale now for the 2019-2020 hunting seasons and can be purchased through the agency's 28 law enforcement field offices, at more than 50 state parks and over 1,700 retailers across the state. Licenses may also be purchased online through the TPWD website or by phone at (800) 895-4248. Call center hours are Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. and there is a required \$5 administrative fee for each phone or online transaction. The online transaction system is available 24/7.

New this year, enhancements have been made to make the licensing process simpler and faster. "Expedited checkout" speeds the process of repurchasing the same license items bought most recently within the last three years. It's also now easier to show proof-of-license. Now hunters can use a digital image of their license as proof-of-license for any hunting that doesn't require a tag, like dove hunting. Accepted formats include: (1) a digital photo, (2) an emailed receipt, (3) within the Outdoor Annual app or the My Texas Hunt Harvest app, or 4) online purchase record.

In addition to a hunting license, anyone born after Sept. 1, 1971, must successfully complete a hunter education training course in order to hunt legally in Texas. The TPWD

Hunter Education certification is valid for life and is honored in all other states and provinces. More information about hunter education is available online. If you misplace your certification you can print a replacement online at no cost.

Hunting stamp endorsements which are required in addition to your license include an archery stamp - \$7; migratory game birds - \$7; upland game birds - \$7; and a federal migratory game bird (duck stamp) - \$25.

Hunting Lease License (Types 132, 133, and 134)

Required of a landowner or landowner's agent who leases hunting rights to another person on property they own or control

for pay or other consideration. The license must be displayed on the property.

License fee: \$79 for 1 through 499 acres; \$147 for 500 through 999 acres; or \$252 for 1,000 acres or more: Note - Recordbook no longer required.

In closing, we want you to have a wonderful time during your stay in our area. Please remember that you are ambassadors for all of us involved in the hunting and outdoor industries. Don't forget to think SAFETY every time you handle a firearm, and make proper gun handling and safe shooting a part of your everyday life at home or in the field. Have a safe and successful season.

Texas Game Warden Field Notes

'Expired' License to Kill

On the morning of Sept. 1, two Trinity County game wardens were on patrol when they heard a group of hunters constantly shooting. The wardens located the area and found six individuals hunting in

an area baited with milo. When they asked the hunters for their licenses, two hunters said they left it at home, another bought a license three months prior. The wardens informed the hunters that new licenses had only been on sale for two weeks. Several cases were filed, and 36 doves were seized. Restitution and cases pending.



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