



PINEYWOODS POST

*A publication of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department
for landowners and outdoor enthusiasts of the Pineywoods.*

Fall 2013

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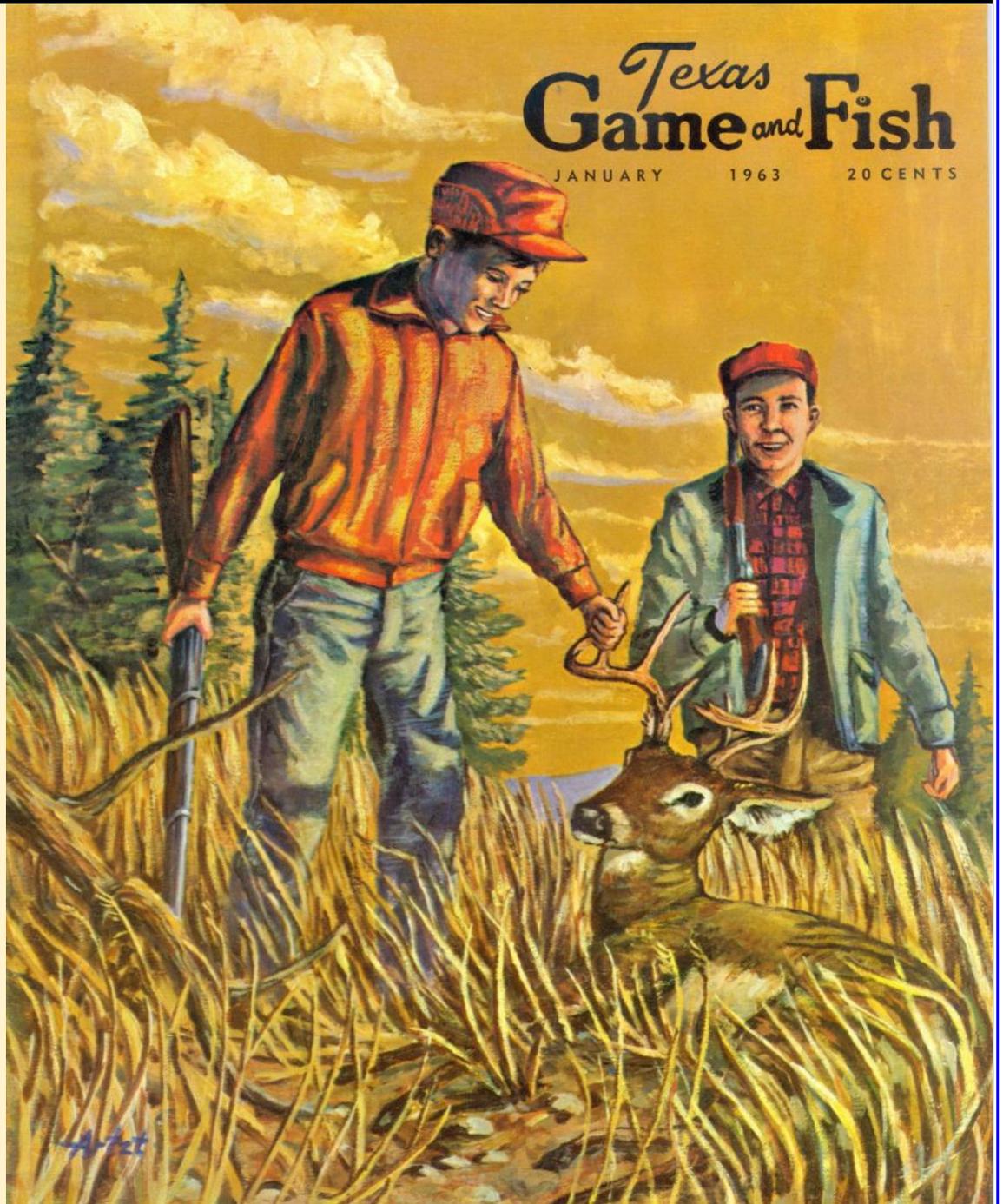
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Happenings in the Pineywoods

Hunting Forecast

Tales from the field— This story was adapted from the bio of Robert Baker. It didn't fit in the space allotted but I thought it was worth telling so I put it here.

For the most part, hunters reported fewer deer observed during the 2012-13 season. Although official harvest numbers are not yet available, if the number of deer checked by Department staff at local deer processors is any indication of the number of deer harvested, harvest was also down. Although many felt that there were fewer deer on the landscape, the number of deer observed during the Department's 2012 summer deer spotlight surveys did not suggest any significant declines, and the 2013 surveys are showing average to good numbers. There are several possible explanations for the reduction in the number of deer observed/harvested during the 2012-13 season: 1) Most areas had a heavy acorn crop, 2) Mature acorns began falling earlier than normal, and 3) Temperatures were warm during the early part of gun season, when most hunters are in the woods. All three of these could contribute to reduced deer movement/visibility/harvest, especially for hunters that concentrated hunting efforts around corn feeders.

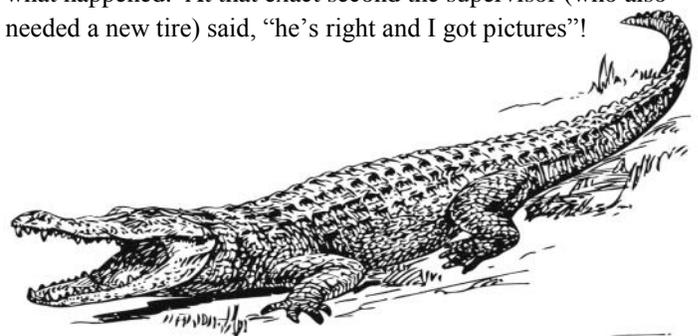
With the reduced harvest, carryover from last year should be pretty high which bodes well for antler quality, as another year of age can make a big difference in antler production. Overall, the antler restrictions are protecting quality young bucks and the age structure of bucks is improving. At least 3 Boone and Crockett bucks were harvested from low-fence properties during the 2012 season.

2013 Forecast

Indications from cooperator reports and TPWD spotlight surveys are that both fawn and antler production this summer are about average. Deer came out of the winter stress period in decent shape due to the heavy acorn crops, and were greeted with moderate-good rainfall during early spring. Although most of the District has been classified as moderate to severe drought since mid July, there have been periodic spotty rains that have been "timely". In other words, although "total" rainfall may be lacking, there have been rain events that were well spaced in time that have kept plants actively growing, which is important for lactating does and antler growing bucks.

Indications from across the district are that acorn production is spotty at best which could positively influence deer movement. Recent reports from cooperators and hunting clubs are that the deer are actively feeding on corn right now which could translate into higher hunter success rates. Recent rains have also been a welcome sight to hunters who planted fall food plots. The flush of new green growth is sure to attract many deer following this period of drought. Overall, the prognosis for the 2013-14 season looks good.

One of the stories that sticks out in my mind involved a ticked off alligator that my boss and I caught. I got a call about 5:00pm one afternoon that there was a large alligator in a mud hole in a road out in the middle of nowhere that had attacked two trucks, and would we come get it. I asked my boss if he would come with me to check this out. Normally when we get these calls it turns out to be a lot smaller than they tell us. This was not the case with this alligator. It turned out to be around 10 feet long. The alligator was in a mud hole about 1-2 feet deep and about 3 times as long as a truck. It had bitten 2 trucks. The first was the pipeline company workers truck which looked like someone had taken a screwdriver and just slashed down one side of the truck. The second truck belonged to the supervisor who came to check out the damage to the first truck. The supervisor's truck had one of the rear drive tires bitten as he tried to drive through the mud to get to the first truck. When we arrived on the scene we tried to capture the gator from the banks of the mud hole but could not. Finally I backed the truck into the hole with my boss holding a rope in the back. Suddenly the truck (a ¾ ton diesel) jumped and a new air leaking sound appeared (luckily it was the spare tire). At this time the boss started to yell to get back out of the hole. Quickly he yelled, stop backup and was able to get the rope on the alligator. We were then able to wrangle the gator out of the water. He fought us the entire way and we finally got him under control enough (so we thought) to get him into the back of the truck. While getting him into the back of the truck we found that the mouth was not quite as secure as we thought and started to come open. The boss then said "Houston we have a problem" as he sat on the tool box with the opening alligator mouth between his legs. So we got the alligator secure again (so we thought) and started out for the release site. Along the way it came loose 2 other times. At the release site things did not get any easier, and it had to have been the meanest alligator I have been a part of catching. The next day at the tire shop when I was getting the spare tire replaced people were asking me why the tire was that torn up. I told them that an alligator bit it. They said no really what happened. At that exact second the supervisor (who also needed a new tire) said, "he's right and I got pictures"!



BIOLOGIST BIO

ROBERT BAKER, TPWD WILDLIFE BIOLOGIST, JASPER, TX

PW Post: What is your job title and what are your main job duties?

RB: I am a district biologist and I have 2 primary duties and they are providing technical guidance for private citizens and conducting regulatory duties for the state. In addition I help conduct management and outreach activities on the East Texas Conservation Center (District 6 field office).

PW Post: How many years did you spend in college and what are your degrees in?

RB: I spent 7 years in college. I received a B.S. degree in wildlife and fisheries science from Texas A&M University and a M.S. degree in wildlife and fisheries ecology from Oklahoma State University.

PW Post: Can you tell our readers a little bit about your background and how you became interested in being a wildlife biologist?

RB: I grew up in College Station Texas. My parents were both college professors. I have one brother who went on to become a career military officer. My Dad introduced me to hunting and fishing early in life. After that all I wanted to do was be outdoors. I spent most of my youth doing anything outdoors including being involved in scouting eventually becoming an Eagle Scout. When it came time to go to college I wanted to continue to spend time outdoors and it just seemed natural to work with wildlife.

PW Post: How long have you been a biologist? When and how did you start with TPWD?

RB: I have worked in the wildlife field in various jobs since 1998 all over the Southeastern US. I started with the North Carolina Wildlife Resource Commission working on a bobwhite quail research project. Then I worked as a game bird technician with Tall Timbers Research technician. While there I conducted research projects in Florida, Georgia, Mississippi, and Tennessee. Next was graduate school in Oklahoma working with quail in the Texas Panhandle. After graduate school I wanted to come back to Texas and interviewed for and was offered my current job with TPWD.

PW Post: What is your philosophy as a wildlife biologist?

RB: I want to leave it better than I found it, and help other people to do the same.

PW Post: What do you enjoy the most about your job?

RB: I enjoy the “hands on work” which is the prescribed fire, tractor work, herbicide, etc.. The other part that I like is the variety of work. You may be talking to a school group in the morning, write a management plan for a landowner in the afternoon, and then catching alligators for a research project that night.

PW Post: What do you find the most challenging?

RB: The challenging part of the job is what makes it interesting. Those challenges could be the actuality physicality of conducting a growing season burn, entering a room of people that have an opposite view from yours, or the unknown problem that pops up.

PW Post: Do you have any advice for students who want to be professional wildlife biologists?

RB: Get as much hands on experience as you can while in school. This can happen through internships, graduate students, and research projects. In addition meet all of the professionals and professors that you can. Networking is key to getting your foot in the door and sometimes even finding the door.

PW Post: What are your personal interests?

RB: My personal interests lie in the wife, family, and the outdoors.



TPWD Biologist Robert Baker capturing an American Bald eagle with an injured wing in Sabine County. The bird was ultimately successfully rehabbed and returned to the wild.

GET OUT AND MAKE A MEMORY THIS FALL

DANIEL PRICE TPWD BIOLOGIST

Making memories with your friends and family could be one of the most important things you could do. As adults we have more freedom and flexibility in our lives to allow for this...or do we? Something I hear all the time and get caught saying myself is, "there just isn't enough time in the day" or "I'm just too busy." Something else I hear is that everything is just too expensive and it is. We are living in a time where the price of everything is going up and up. Gas prices keep shooting up, ammo prices are up, the grocery bill keeps getting higher and higher and when you have kids it seems like your paycheck gets smaller and smaller. I was blessed October 16, 2012 with a new baby girl who will be about a year old now as you read this. Over the past year, I have had teach myself how to slow down on my hobbies to ensure that I didn't miss the first time she rolled over or when she took that first step in life without any help. My life has just changed in a big way and I now must learn how to make memories with my friends and family in a whole new way. I now must learn to pick activities that my wife and daughter will enjoy that will still get us outdoors.

Growing up in the country on a 15 acre farm, I was able to be outside a lot whether it was for work or play. With all the work that went into a 15 acre place not all of my memories were great, exciting, or fun but they are memories all the same. Hauling hay or spraying mesquites with my dad was hard work but it is still something I will always remember. Riding with my dad on the tractor putting out hay or shredding the pasture, made me feel on top of the world. My childhood friend and I would explore the country side crawling off into creeks and ditches, or riding our bikes for miles looking for the next adventure. My first hunting safari took place with my pellet gun shooting frogs, snakes, and probably a few birds I shouldn't say I shot over the watering hole behind the house. I was a young child exploring what I thought was the great outdoors not knowing there was a whole lot more out there.

Before I went to college I didn't know anything about Texas Parks and Wildlife Department other than a Game Warden would come write me a ticket if I didn't have my hunting license or if I shot something illegal. I certainly didn't know that there were state parks that my family and I could go camping at or that there were WMA's that we could hunt. Growing up we camped in someone's pasture and got permission to hunt other people's land, again not knowing there was so much more out there.

In the 2013-2014 Map Booklet for Public Hunting Lands, it states that there are almost 900,000 acres of land located throughout Texas owned by TPWD or leased by the department for public hunting opportunities. Of that, 169,345 acres is found right here in the Pineywoods. As stated in the Public Hunting Lands Booklet, access to these properties is provided by two types of annual permits: the \$48 Annual Public Hunting (APH) Permit which allows full privileges including hunting, fishing, camping, hiking, and other recreational uses and the \$12 Limited Public Use (LPU) Permit which also provides access for all other recreational activities except hunting. Many of these properties are Wildlife Management Area's (WMA's) that are managed to conserve the natural and cultural resources by TPWD Biologists and Technicians. Each WMA or public hunting area will be slightly different when it comes to the legal game allowed to harvest, season dates, hunting methods or even the methods used to travel within the WMA. Some areas will allow the use of ATV's or ORV's whereas others do not. Some areas may only have a youth only hunt for specific species such as squirrel, where others are open to both adult and youth for the entire season. Some areas will allow archery only for the entire season for white-tailed deer where others are by a draw hunt only. So for \$48 a year you have access to hunt almost 170,000 acres right here in the Pineywoods. Remember these areas are not only meant to be hunted. For \$12 a year you can access these areas to fish, hike, go camping or simply get out and do a little wildlife viewing. The excuse of not being able to hunt because you can't afford a deer lease or you don't have a place to go just disappeared. For many of us living in the Pineywoods there is a public hunting area within an hour of where we live. Take a look at the Public Hunting Lands Booklet and plan a hunt or outdoor activity on a WMA or other public hunting area this fall. Map booklets are issued with the purchase of a LPU or APH permit at your local TPWD law enforcement office. If you purchase your permit at a location other than a TPWD law enforcement office your map booklet will be mailed directly to you. Maps and more information are also available on our website: www.tpwd.state.tx.us/public hunts/.

As I mentioned, some public hunting areas and WMA's are hunted by a draw hunt only. This hunting process is completely different from the way you would hunt using the Public Hunting Lands Booklet. When you hunt a WMA or public hunting area using your APH permit, you are allowed the freedom to select the time and place to hunt and then hunt as often as you'd like. When you apply for a draw hunt the dates have been set, and on some units you are limited to an assigned blind. There are deadlines to apply for the hunts so in most cases you must plan months in advance to determine whether or not that hunt is right for you. On the majority of the hunts there will be a few stand-by positions available on the morning of the first hunt day. A stand-by position is created when someone who has been drawn for the hunt does not show up on the first day of the hunt. So even if you missed the deadlines to apply for this year, there is still some potential for you to make the hunt as a stand-by hunter. The number of stand-by positions available will not be known until that first morning of the hunt so you would have to be present to win that spot to hunt. Other state lands that are commonly used to conduct draw hunts are State Parks and State Forests.

GET OUT AND MAKE A MEMORY THIS FALL CONT.

Conducting hunts on these properties allows us to manage and conserve the natural resources while providing a hunting opportunity, as stated in the TPWD mission. Here in the Pineywoods we have 14 different locations totaling just over 90,000 acres that conduct drawn hunts on State Parks, WMA's and State Forests. Several of these hunts are designated for Youth Only, meaning the hunter must be under 17 years old and accompanied by an adult. This would be a great opportunity to take your kid, grandkid, or someone else's kid out for a memorable hunting experience. Again, with these hunting opportunities there should be no excuse about being able to afford to hunt or not. For an adult to participate in a hunt there is an application fee (typically \$3 per hunter per hunt applied) required when you apply for the hunt. Then if you are drawn there will be a small charge of \$80 for a three day hunt or \$130 for a five day hunt. The cost for a five day hunt does not even come close to the cost of a yearly hunting lease here in the Pineywoods. For youth to hunt in a drawn hunt there is no application fee or charge to participate in the hunt. There is no reason not to take a kid hunting this fall. To learn more about the drawn hunts throughout the state and to find one right here in your backyard, find an Application Booklet for Drawings on Public Hunting Lands or visit our website www.tpwd.state.tx.us/huntwild/hunt/public/public_hunt_drawing/.

Participating in these public hunting opportunities is a great way to make memories with your friends and family. Take someone out this fall to a WMA or other designated public hunting area for a hunt. Maybe your neighbor has never been hunting or in my case, my dad and I have never gone squirrel hunting together. Plan a trip to a public hunting area and hunt something for your first time or take a kid out hunting for their first time. If hunting is not for you, just get outdoors and enjoy the sounds you don't hear every day or the smells you don't smell every day. Learn something new when you go camping this fall at your local State Park. Go on a hike and try to identify all the birds you see and hear or all the plants you find. Remember the TPWD Mission is to provide hunting, fishing and outdoor recreation opportunities for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations. Take a family that lives down the street from you camping for their first time. You will be surprised how many people have never sat around a camp fire telling stories and eating s'mores. I challenge YOU to take at least one person out this fall to enjoy the great outdoors and to make a memory of a lifetime. Make time in that busy lifestyle of yours and take a trip to a State Park, State Forest, WMA or other public hunting lands...I know I will.



Braxton Dunn harvested the first deer legally taken off the I.D. Fairchild State Forest during a public hunt offered through the Public Hunting Draw System during the 2012-2013 hunting season. He made a memory of a lifetime taking his first deer during this Youth Hunt.

Texas Youth Hunting Program

Preserving Tomorrow's Hunting Heritage Today!

TEXAS WILDLIFE ASSOCIATION

TEXAS PARKS & WILDLIFE

Whether you are a youth looking to get involved in hunting or an adult looking to mentor a kid, the Texas Youth Hunting program offers you the opportunity to make memories in the field. The Texas Youth Hunting program was formed when TPWD and Texas Wildlife Association (TWA) joined forces to provide safe, educational, and affordable hunts for the youth of Texas. To learn more visit www.texasyouthhunting.com.

RESEARCH UPDATE— AGE AND ANTLERS

GARY CALKINS TPWD DISTRICT 6 LEADER

Listen to kids on any playground when they first meet and it won't take long until one asks the other "how old are you". Age is a benchmark in so many of our societal rules that it is simply accepted as a daily part of our lives. That is until a lady reaches 29 and a man simply forgets how old he is; the lady stays 29 and the man stays confused. However, this relative importance placed on age transcends species and is important for others such as white-tailed deer. In Texas, the antler quality of a buck is a highly discussed topic and that topic is as tied to age as are voting rights to 18 year olds.

When looking at the antler quality of a white-tailed deer, width, length and mass generally increase with age. Without the correct number of birthdays going by, there simply won't be the higher Boone and Crockett score.

In much of the Pineywoods, the harvest of 1.5 and 2.5 year old bucks has been extremely high for years for many reasons. In some areas, this has amounted to roughly 70% of the harvest coming from these age classes. This has led to a false impression that the Pineywoods can't produce the large quality bucks that typically come from places like South Texas. However, genetically this is far from the truth as the Pineywoods has huge potential from the trophy standpoint, we just don't let many bucks get large enough (in other words old enough) to reach their potential. With that fact in place, the best management decision a typical hunter can make is to "let it walk another year".

That 'one more year' philosophy is fine on paper but I can almost hear the groans now as many hunters will say; "but if I don't shoot it, my neighbor will". And in fact, up until antler restriction regulations went into effect across the Pineywoods; that may or may not have been the case. Now, however, that buck has as much opportunity to walk another year on the neighbor's property as it does yours.

It probably can't be stated enough that the idea behind the antler restriction regulation was not as a trophy buck tool, but as a tool to increase the age structure of the buck segment of the deer herd. From a herd health standpoint, the age increase will lead to several benefits to the deer herd including increased fawn survival. From the hunters' viewpoint, an added benefit of the regulation is they will see more bucks with larger antlers.

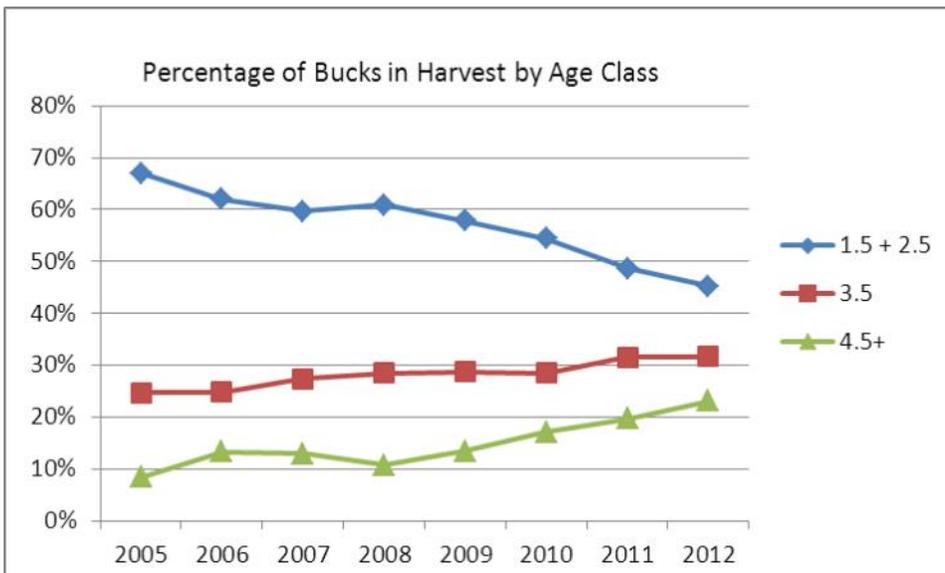
The first 16 counties that went under antler restrictions were in 2006 and made up the northern Pineywoods. When it all started there, approximately 71% of the bucks killed were 1.5 and 2.5 year old deer. The second phase happened when the 11 southern Pineywoods counties went under the regulation in 2009. In that area, the harvest consisted of 67% being 1.5 and 2.5 years old. Simply stated, from a deer herd standpoint, we were "hunting the hatch" and just not letting that many deer mature. So from an antler standpoint what did that mean?

Working simply from the inside antler spread perspective (based on Pineywoods data) it means that the *average* 1.5 year old buck will have an inside spread of just over 6.5 inches and a 2.5 year old buck will register an average of nearly 12 inches. Within those first two sets of antlers, the inside spread will nearly double and other antler measurements will also increase correspondingly. With the next jumps to 3.5 and 4.5, average inside spreads will increase to roughly 13.5 and just over 15 inches, respectively. So by simply letting that buck age you have the chance of shooting a buck that is nearly 2.5 times larger than it was at 1.5 years old.

With all of that said, what has happened to the age structure of the bucks in the Pineywoods since antler restrictions? Thank you for asking! Since the data from the initial 16 counties and the southern 11 counties are showing the same trends, it has been combined for these numbers. The percentage of 1.5 and 2.5 year old bucks in the harvest has dropped from 67 in 2005 to 45 in 2012. The harvest of 3.5 year old bucks has increased from 25 to 32 percent during that same time period. And when combining 4.5 year old and older deer it has resulted in an increase from 8 to 23 percent of the harvest! Taking those numbers and extrapolating that to the field indicates there is a greater number of older age class bucks in the herd available for harvest.

Recent research indicates the increased buck age structure has improved the breeding chronology of our does which is leading to a healthier deer herd in general. The benefit to the hunter is that the odds of finding the trophy that you have been waiting for are increasing with every year a buck gets older. So – what are you waiting for? Go Hunting!

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RESEARCH UPDATE- BREEDING CHRONOLOGY

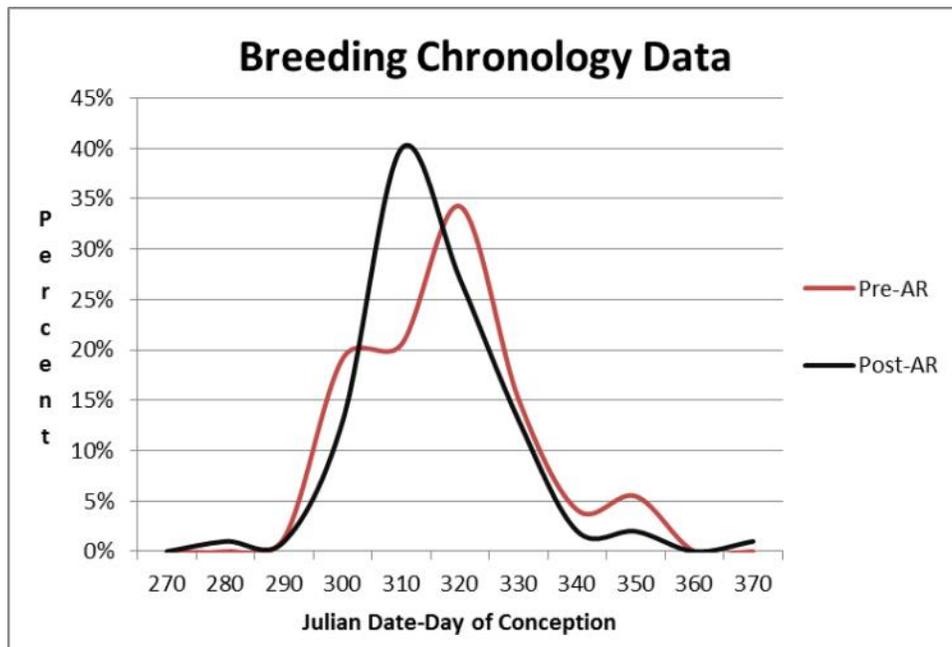
MICAH POTEET TPWD DISTRICT 6 TECHNICAL GUIDANCE BIOLOGIST

White-tailed deer hunters are always interested in the timing of the breeding season or “rut”. Hunters are interested in hunting during the rut because their likelihood of killing a buck increases. A buck’s urge to locate/breed a doe often causes it to drop its guard and do things it may not normally do. This temporary insanity can make that wise old buck vulnerable to the hunter. For example, a buck that is normally mostly nocturnal may be moving around in broad daylight in search of does. Not only are bucks more active during daylight, they also move greater distances. A buck’s food intake greatly decreases and his energy is spent looking for a receptive doe. In fact, a buck may lose up to 25% of his body weight during the breeding season.

Biologists are also interested in the timing of the rut. Although many biologists are deer hunters, our concerns go beyond “when is the best time to kill a mature buck”. These concerns are related to when the does are bred, and when the subsequent fawns will be born. As biologists, we want to see fawns born early in the spring/summer. Range conditions are generally much better in the early spring and summer and these conditions allow the doe to produce quality milk which the fawns are dependent upon. As the summer progresses, heat and decreased rainfall results in poor range conditions which can negatively affect does and their nursing fawns. Because of the declining range conditions, the earlier the fawn is born, the better its chances for survival.

Biologists also prefer a definitive peak in breeding activity. In other words, we would like to see the majority of the breeding occur over as few days as possible. This results in lots of fawns being born essentially at the same time. When this happens, the habitat becomes “saturated” with a prey base (fawns) over a short time period. This generally results in less fawn loss due to predation.

Recent research indicated that improved buck age structure positively influenced the timing of the rut. County wide antler restrictions were implemented in many east Texas counties in 2006. The purpose of the regulation was to improve the number and age structure of bucks. In order to document any potential changes in the breeding chronology due to an improved buck age structure, we collected bred does prior to the implementation of antler restrictions and determined the breeding chronology of these does. This data served as a pre-regulation baseline. We collected additional bred does in 2011 to monitor any subsequent changes in breeding chronology. This data served as 5 year post-regulation data. The chart below illustrates the changes in breeding chronology.



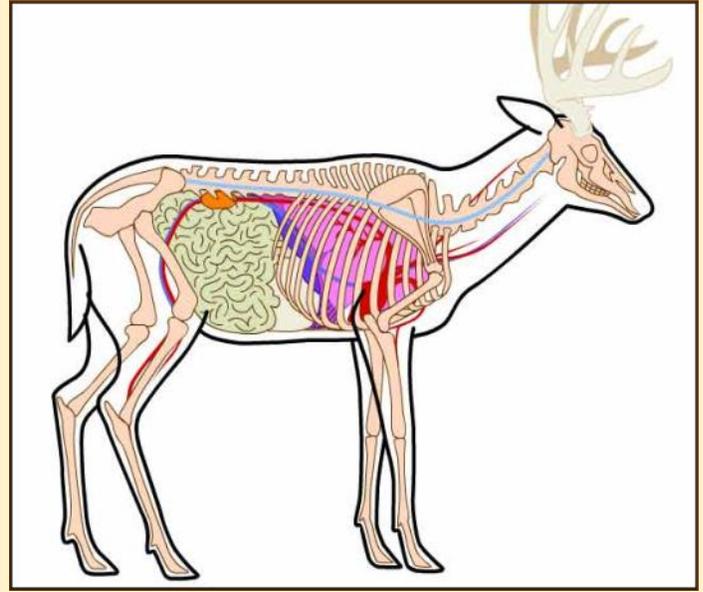
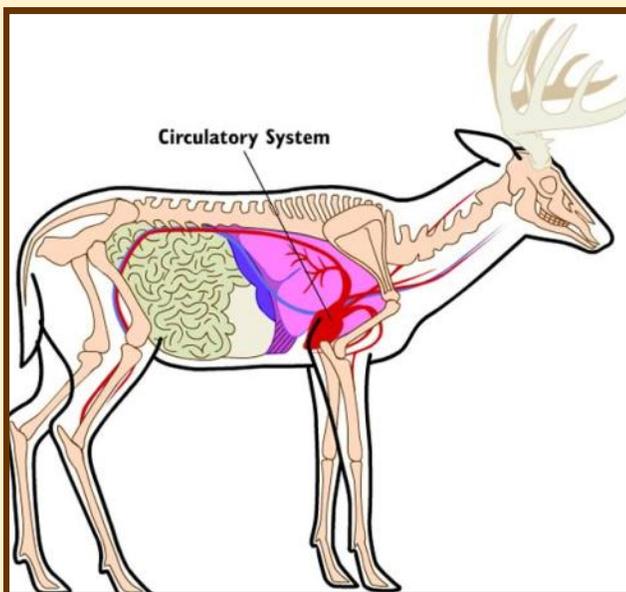
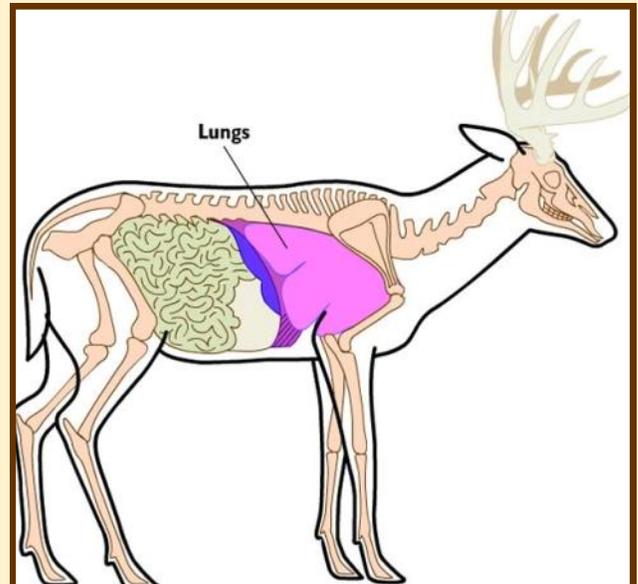
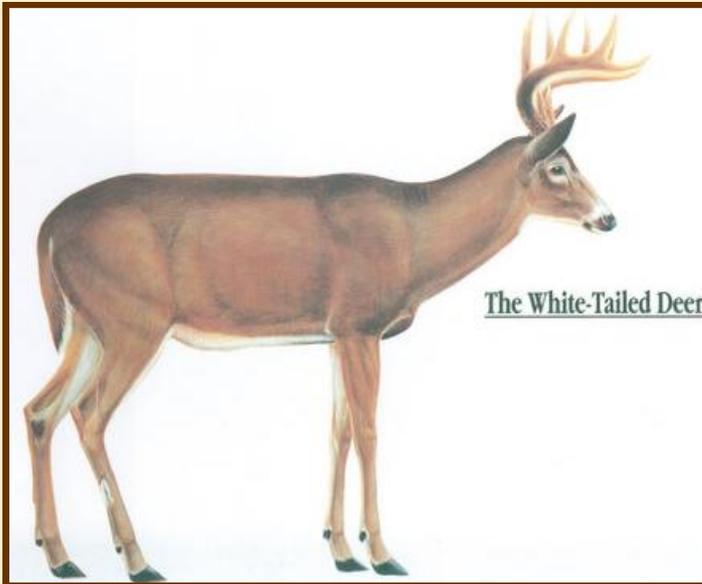
Just prior to the implementation of the antler restriction regulation, peak breeding occurred during November 16-25 (red line). Five years post-regulation, peak breeding occurred from November 6-15 (black line). Earlier breeding results in earlier fawning which should improve fawn survival. In addition to the shift to an earlier period, a higher percentage of does were bred during this peak. This results in a larger group of fawns hitting the ground at the same time, which should result in fewer fawns being lost to predation.

Not only has the antler restriction improved buck age structure, which generally means larger antlers; research also suggests overall herd health has improved, which is good news for both hunters and biologists.

Plans are already in place to continue this research project in 2016 (10 years post-regulation), providing additional data on the long term effect of antler restrictions and more insight into that brief period of time when the wall hanger buck seen on a game camera is a little more likely to be seen during shooting hours.

Stewardship Snapshots

In honor of the upcoming hunting season I thought it was a good time to print these awesome deer anatomy illustrations I recently came across. Whether you are young or old, it never hurts to have an anatomy reminder lesson in order to help us as hunters make the best shot possible. I remember as a youth being told to put it “right behind his shoulder”. While not a bad place to aim due to the large expanse covered by the lungs, I think if we move our aim point a bit forward to “just above the elbow”, it gives us a better opportunity for not only a lung shot but a heart/lung shot insuring a cleaner, quicker kill.



Send us your photos! Send us your wildlife, nature, hunter harvest, or interesting trail cam pictures. To submit your photo for consideration send an email to Rusty.Wood@TPWD.Texas.Gov and tell us who took it, where, and when.

FEDERAL AID

DAN JONES, TPWD WILDLIFE BIOLOGIST



FEDERAL WILDLIFE RESTORATION PROGRAM BENEFITS TEXAS

In North America wildlife is managed as a public trust resource with the states (including U.S. territories and Canadian provinces) serving as primary custodians for most species. Even though wildlife is owned by no one, sustainable management of this resource and its habitat for the benefit of current and future generations requires funding. Beginning in the mid-19th century the U.S. government enacted laws in response to declining wildlife populations from commercial market hunting. These laws regulated harvest and commerce in wildlife, but it soon became apparent that long-term restoration and conservation would require a dependable mechanism for funding the programs of fledgling state wildlife agencies. Early regulatory and conservation efforts were variously funded by donations from hunting organizations and general state revenues, but primarily by sportsmen through a user pay/user-benefit system of license sales and stamp programs.

In the wake of the depression of the 1920s-30s wildlife populations and habitat conditions were declining nationwide as a result of decades of overharvest and poor agricultural practices. The inability of states to adequately address these issues with available funding sources resulted in the passage of the Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Act in 1937 with the support of political leaders, hunters, private conservation organizations, firearm manufacturers, and others. More commonly known as the Pittman-Robertson Act, or P-R, after its congressional sponsors; this law extended the provision of an existing excise tax on sporting firearms and ammunition, with proceeds to be distributed to the states for wildlife restoration. Subsequent amendments made the law permanent and expanded its scope to include hunter education and target range construction. In 1950 a similar law to fund sport fish restoration and associated activities, the Federal Aid in Sport Fisheries Restoration (Dingell-Johnson) Act, was passed by Congress. Collectively these two laws form the basis of the Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program which is administered by the U.S. Department of the Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). The wildlife component of this is the Wildlife Restoration Program (WRP).

Currently, P-R levies an excise tax on manufacturers and importers of certain hunting and recreational shooting equipment at the rate of 11% for long guns, ammunition, and certain archery equipment. Handguns are taxed at 10%. This tax is then passed on to consumers. The federal government collects these taxes and deposits them into the federal Wildlife Restoration Account, a trust fund for wildlife conservation. Funds are apportioned annually through the federal budget process to the states (about \$7.5 billion since 1939) by means of a series of grant programs, most of which utilize a formula based on the geographic area of the state and the number of licensed hunters. While this method is relatively equitable for each state, it is obvious that large states with many sportsmen such as Texas, would receive a large amount of these federal funds. In fact, Texas typically receives the maximum amount allowed through this program.

As with any federal program there are regulations associated with this aid. Projects eligible for funding include: research, restoration, conservation, management and enhancement of public and private lands habitat, providing public benefit from these resources, hunter education and shooting range programs, waterfowl impoundments, land acquisition and easements, and program administration. Ineligible activities include public relations, revenue production, enforcement of game and fish laws, publishing and distributing regulations, construction of public facilities not directly related to conservation, stocking of game animals for recreation only, and most types of wildlife damage management activities. States must also submit annual status reports for each eligible project and periodic audits of state programs are conducted by USFWS. The major grant programs available through the WRP are:

Wildlife Restoration Grants - This program provides a large portion of most state fish and wildlife agencies' budgets to carry out their basic functions of conservation, management, and research. P-R funded activities also include wildlife-related recreation, hunter education, and the construction and operation of shooting ranges. The apportionment formula is based on land area and the number of licensed hunters, with a federal match of up to 75% for approved project costs. Many of TPWD's management activities related to major game species utilize P-R funds, and acquisition and operation of most of our Wildlife Management Areas are supported through this program.

FEDERAL AID CONT.

State Wildlife Grants - This program's priority is on conservation projects that benefit species, typically non-game, and their habitat that have been identified of the greatest conservation need. Each state must prepare and submit for approval a comprehensive wildlife action plan which identifies these species and strategies to conserve and recover them before they become more costly to protect. These funds are authorized for research, surveys, species and habitat management, monitoring, and to update, revise, or modify a state's plan. SWG appropriation to states is annual, non-competitive, and based on a formula wherein no state receives more than 5% or less than 1% of the total available. The Texas Conservation Action Plan can be accessed at <http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/landwater/land/tcap/>. Projects in the Pineywoods utilizing SWG include management-oriented research on black bears, bat species, the Louisiana pine snake, alligator snapping turtles, and colonial waterbirds. In addition, since 2008 Congress has authorized funding for a nationally-competitive state wildlife grant program (SWG-C) which encourages multi-partner projects that implement actions contained in the state wildlife action plans. This program helps support regional/multi-state, conservation strategies such as Landscape Conservation Cooperatives (LCC) and Joint Ventures.

Landowner Incentive Grants - The Landowner Incentive Program (LIP) provides federal funds to the states for technical and financial assistance to private landowners for protection and restoration of habitats benefitting state or federally listed, proposed or candidate species or other species or plant communities determined to be at-risk in the state Wildlife Action Plan. In contrast to other federal wildlife grants discussed here, LIP grants are derived from Outer Continental Shelf oil and gas royalty revenues. These funds must be used to establish or supplement state landowner incentive programs. In Texas, TPWD's Landowner Assistance Program (the first in the nation) is funded by SWG with reimbursement of up to a 75% on completed projects. This assistance to ranchers and other landowners is important in Texas where about 95% of the state is in private ownership. LIP has been used in the Pineywoods to restore longleaf pine savanna and associated communities in Angelina, Cherokee, Jasper, Nacogdoches, Newton, and Sabine Counties.

Multistate Conservation Grants - This is a P-R funded program that supports projects addressing problems affecting states on a regional or national basis. Examples of projects supported are: biological research/training, species population status, outreach, data collection regarding hunter participation, hunter/aquatic education, economic value of hunting, and regional or multistate habitat needs assessments. This program is managed cooperatively by the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (AFWA) and the USFWS, with AFWA administering the grant application process, providing oversight, coordination, and guidance for the program while USFWS awards and manages the grants. Three million dollars annually is provided for award to individual or groups of states, and non-governmental organizations.

In Texas, TPWD pays for the operational activities and capital projects of the Wildlife Division from the Game, Fish, and Water Safety Account. The primary revenue sources for this special budget account (also known as Fund 9) are state license and stamp sales, and federal funds. In 2013, P-R provided over \$16 million (61%) of the Wildlife Division budget. This is a major financial contribution to TPWD's ability to manage and conserve wildlife and habitat resources, and assist private landowners in their efforts. There are no comparable funding sources for wildlife from other sectors of the public, and no other single conservation effort in the United States contributes more to wildlife conservation than the Wildlife Restoration Program. This federal/state cooperative partnership continues to provide a permanent and dedicated funding source for wildlife and habitat conservation to meet the current needs and future challenges in Texas.

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TEXAS PARKS AND WILDLIFE DEPARTMENT MISSION STATEMENT

"To manage and conserve the natural and cultural resources of Texas and to provide hunting, fishing and outdoor recreation opportunities for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations."

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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