

TEXAS SPORTSMAN'S NEWS

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February, 2011

The Newsletter of The Texas Sportsman's Association

"Dedicated to educating the public about the need for protection, conservation and improvement of fish, game and other wildlife, grasslands, and forests and to safeguard the freedoms that enable these pursuits."

Spring Meeting set March 6th at Mentz Hall

The annual Spring Business Meeting of the Texas Sportsman's Association is scheduled for Sunday, March 6 at Mentz Hall.

A hearty Buck's Famous Beef Stew will be served beginning at 11 a.m., and nonmembers may eat for only \$5.00.

The meeting follows the meal, and the association will elect a new vice president and treasurer.

The guest speaker will be Dawn Vollmer from the Texas Forest Service of the Texas A&M University System. She will give a presentation on trees — how they help the environment, and how they are tied to a healthy wildlife population.

As a special feature, TSA is planning to honor all life members of the organization during the meeting, and requests that they attend the meeting.

Lifetime members are as follows: Gilbert Alaniz, Alton Barton, Gladys M. and Henry Beyer, Michael Bronikowski, Kennon Lee and Marilyn S. Cantley, Glen and Vickie Denyer, Bruce Fike, David Foerster, Charles H. Friemel, Frankie L. Friemel, Billy Hajek, Virginia Young, Chester L. Hobbs, James W. Holland, Mark Janicek, Kent Johnson, Royce Jurries, John Kohleffel, Mrs. Roger Kokemor, John and Margaret Kraemer, Crockett Leyendecker, Larry Livanec, Edward J. Machala, John Maertz, Tori Maertz, Travis Maertz, Michael Naise, Erik Nygren, John H. O'Neal Jr., Edward Posas Jr., R.H. Priesmeyer, Doris and L.J. Rinn, Mary Rinn, Gary Schertz, Steve Short, Boyd Ueckert, Daniel Vornsand, John L. Walla and Karl D. Youens.

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THEY JUST KEPT COMIN' —R.H. Priesmeyer at Cat Spring recently eliminated these three coyotes with a .223-calibre Thompson rifle. All three were shot within 10 minutes. First one came out of the woods, and he shot it. Then another one appeared, and shortly thereafter a third. He shot them, too.

On the inside ..

Columnist Herman Brune wraps up a two-part series on how the explosion of drug violence across the border is affecting Texas sportsmen, whose hunting trips to Mexico have all but disappeared**Page 3**

Cat Spring author and historian Herbert Kollatschny shares some history of deer hunting in Austin County, and also provides an interesting glimpse into the area's past. **Page 5**

**TEXAS
SPORTSMAN'S ASSOCIATION**
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Visit TSA On Line!

The TSA web site is up and running, and members are encouraged to visit:

<http://www.texassportsmansassociation.org>

The website is maintained by
TSA Director Leslie Heinsohn.

TSA County Officers

Austin County

President — Shane Scherbig

Vice President — David Wade

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Committeeman — Wilfred Eckardt

Colorado County

President — Terrel Maertz

Vice President — Jerry Woodward

Secretary-Treasurer — Ruth Poncik

Committeeman — Walt Glasscock

**A note from
the President**

Happy New Year, TSA members!

I hope last year was a bountiful year for your outdoor experiences. I will share a short bit from the camps in our area of Lavaca and Southern Colorado counties. The trail cameras actually told the story of how adaptive the older bucks are and how the range conditions affected their movement.

Up until the Sept. 26 weekend, we had downloaded pictures of many nice 3½- to 4½-year-old bucks. We were enthusiastic and then the following weekend for archery season, they were nowhere to be found. The only showers we got were from the acorns raining down. I talked to other hunters in surrounding camps and the story was the same. I hunted the month of October and did eventually have opportunities at some 4½-year-old bucks, but we never saw the trophies we had anticipated. It was a great season and the bucks should be even better next year. Any time spent in the stand is priceless and I had many eventful hunts without harvesting anything. Come by and share a story at the meeting.



We need all members at the Sunday, March 6, 2011 business meeting at Mentz Hall. We will be having guest speakers and we will elect a new vice president and treasurer. Members will be treated to Buck's Famous Stew Lunch and nonmembers will eat for only \$5.00.

Back to the Business at hand: we need nominations for both of the above mentioned officers. You are encouraged to mail them in or make nominations at the meeting. Also, if you are a life member, please be sure to let the registration person know, so we can recognize you during the meeting.

We are scheduled to meet Feb. 9, to decide our finalists for the 2011 scholarships. As you know, we award two \$500 scholarships from within our area schools each year. We also will be taking applications for the Buckskin Brigade and will again pay the \$300 fee for two youth who get accepted.

I checked the TP&W Home page for any fishing or hunting regulations that may be affecting our area. There are some hot topics about turkey seasons and MLD permits for mule deer, but nothing appeared to be affecting our areas. However, if the membership feels there are concerns that we need to address, please bring them to our attention so we can get them on our agenda.

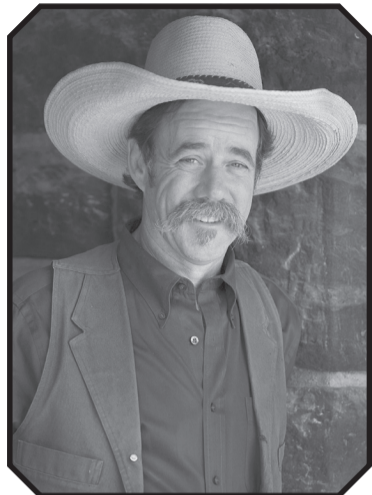
We look forward to and will be planning to see all members on March 6! Due to our overwhelming participation at the fall fundraiser, we hope to be better prepared to handle the crowd.

Thank YOU for Your Support!

David Gohlke

Looking Down From the Saddle

By HERMAN W. BRUNE



Mexican violence vs. sportsmen

(Part Two)

One hundred miles of rough gravel road lay behind us. The translator, landowner, and I had crossed the Rio Grande five hours earlier. My purpose was to appraise the landowner's deer hunting and offer advice. Now in a fence corner near a rundown hacienda, while the landowner opened a wire gap, a rattle-trap Chevy pickup pulled in close behind us. The passenger-side occupant stepped out and stood at my tailgate; he fingered a short piece of pipe but in a moment I realized he was actually fidgeting with a pistol.

The driver approached me, read the concern in my eyes, and raised both hands in the air. Another man remained in the pickup. All three were bare-headed, wore tattered camouflage pants, dirty white bulletproof vests, and carried 9-mm handguns.

"Como estas?" he said, and smiled between exposed palms.

"Muy bien," I answered.

"You want Spanish or English my friend?"

"... reckon we better use English!"

The question to sportsmen is whether Mexico is safe — for sportsmen. Of course, the simple answer is — no! There isn't a responsible lawman in Texas that would advise crossing the Rio Bravo in search of fun.

And one reason that law enforcement officials have that policy is because many game wardens, deputy sheriffs, Border Patrol, etc., say the cartels have sponsored rewards for their deaths. So common sense dictates that if Mexico isn't safe for them, Mexico is not safe for you. Plus the guardians of your well-being won't recommend recreating in a combat zone.

Since the 2006 election of President Felipe Calderon, drug-related violence has claimed more than 23,000 Mexican lives. The out-of-control violence has caused normal activity between the citizens of sister cities to change. Longtime residents of Brownsville, Laredo, and Del Rio have curtailed their popular dinner dates and nights out across the river. Mexico streets that harbor favorite tourist destinations are empty. There is an atmosphere of being close-mouthed, and an attitude that "if you leave them alone they'll leave you alone." The fear of retaliation is real and the majority voice says it's a hard time to be in the Mexico hunting business.

Nevertheless, before further discuss-

ing an apparent consensus, please note examples that may indicate concepts beyond the prescribed norm. One such instance may be related in Keith Bowden's the "Tecate Journals," a story about his, 2007, 70-day trip from El Paso/Juarez to Brownsville/Matamoras via bicycle, canoe, and kayak. Bowden portrays the people along the river with the revelation that peaceable folks are much alike.

But he doesn't hide the truth and mentions sightings of illegal activities. The book contains a fine mixture describing the beauty and travails of his journey versus the social standard that stated "you can't do that."

Then there is the example of "human-traits-gone-wild, come on in the waters fine." During the annual Buckmasters Mexico Whitetail Trophy Hunt Sweepstakes, thousands of sportsmen apply. It is a study in undeniable urges; in this case winning a raffle, despite the forewarned possible jeopardy. It is a case of either thumbing your nose at danger, believing there is no danger, or tossing good sense out the window.

So, why would sensible folks indulge in such risk?

Hunters frequent Mexico for several reasons. One, the trophies are great and the bird limits are generous. And two, adventuresome souls can't resist the allure of exotic retreats. They say that hunters have faced perils around the globe since the beginning of modern Big Game Hunting.

Three American outfitters operating in Mexico, who requested anonymity, had

this to say:

Outfitter #1 said, "Bad guys sell drugs and deal illegal stuff; they don't want to mess with hunters. We're not on their radar. I've never heard of them wanting hunters' guns. Fear has caused the industry to shrink 50 percent. It's tough times to be a Mexico hunting operator. Camps are shutting down for lack of business. The Mexican government offensive against drugs has caused more violence. It will be good long term, but for now there are too many headlines produced to sell newspapers and magazines. Near us there was an incident of dove hunters being held at gun point. But that turned out to be a dispute over landowner's fees. It was not drug related. (Since the interview, this outfitter has closed his Mexico operation due to the heightened violence in his proximity.)"

Outfitter #2 said, "Mexico is a great country with friendly people, but folks ain't going there. We never paid a mordido (bribe) and never had any problems. Dealing with their bureaucracies is a pain, but there is no issue with the Highway Patrol, local police, or federales. As for law enforcement corruption, the military does not seem to be susceptible to bribes and the Mexican version of the DEA is intimidating. The Tampico newspaper said that for drugs to leave Mexico and get through to users in the U.S. — the corruption can't stop at the border."

Outfitter #3 said, "We've hunted and ranches in Mexico since 1989. An Ameri-

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TSA participates in TOP tele-conference

By HERMAN W. BRUNE
TSA Vice President

The TSA was represented at a recent Texas Outdoor Partners (TOP) meeting by Walt Glasscock, via telephone conference, and Herman Brune, live and in-person.

Prior to the meeting, Texas Wildlife Association (TWA) vice president and lobbyist, Kirby Brown, approached Brune about donating a Horseback & Hounds Hog Hunt for the upcoming "Boots on the Ground" Sportsman's Caucus event on behalf of TSA. This event is held at the beginning of state legislative sessions to introduce new and old legislators to representatives from the various statewide conservation organizations.

Brune approved the donation and state Senator Hegar agreed to participate dependent upon scheduling. The Horseback & Hounds Hog Hunt raised \$1,900 for the Sportsman's Caucus in 2009 and was bought by a businessman from Katy.

The bulk of the meeting focused on Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) budget cuts presented by TPWD bean counter Gene McCarty. The main concept discussed was that while state sales tax revenues decline, Fund 9 is growing, (the fiscal mechanism that funds TPWD). Meanwhile, the state legislature is slashing budgets across the board. McCarty reminded attendees that Fund 9 is

never depleted and that remaining monies are used to balance the general budget. In other words, sportsman's tax dollars are increasing but are used to balance the state budget instead of being spent at the dedicated destination, TPWD.

McCarty also pointed out that TPWD budget cuts were not proportional to cuts in other agencies. "While most agencies will see 15 percent cuts," said McCarty, "TPWD is looking at 25 percent cuts. They don't give us a dollar amount and tell us to work with it. They tell us where we're going to cut. This legislature is coming in with an attitude. There is a mandate from the people to make government smaller, and these cuts aren't looked at as short term answers. These budget adjustments are looked at as long term.

"TPWD is important to the local economies in rural areas and must diminish the impact of the proposed cuts," says McCarty. "Let the horse trading begin."

Meeting discussion related to TOP members visiting with sub-committee chairs and members of the Appropriations Committee. However, the discussion also related that TOP members must know which cuts to change and which to leave.

Another topic concerned how to cut part of the funding for programs mandated by statutory law. This includes hunter's and boater's education programs.

It was also noted that a disproportionate

cut was applied to the Wildlife Division of TPWD.

A Synopsis of the budget cuts:

- Reduce biennial budget by \$162 million (25%); \$120 million in Fiscal Year (FY) 2012, \$42 million in FY 2013
- Eliminate 304 FTE (full time employees) in FY 12 and 233 in FY 13 (which means 71 positions lost in FY 12 would be regained in FY 13)
- Eliminate all new capital equipment purchases: vehicles, boats computers, computer systems, telecommunication, other equipment
- Eliminate all grants: local park grants, outreach grants, trail grants, LIP grants, shooting range grants
- Eliminate all new capital construction; UB only, limitation to UB for fund 9, deferred Battleship Texas, Mother Neff and Palo Duro to FY 13.
- Eliminate all land acquisition funding
- 15% cut to divisional and agency administration
- Eliminate construction based appropriation
- Eliminate escrow account funding
- Reduce Communication Division Funding by \$3.4 million (40%) in FY 12, and, \$129K in FY 13 (2%). (This reflects reductions in outreach and education, and communication services and the maga-

(Continued on Page 7)

Registration now under way for Texas Brigades youth program

Registration for the Texas Brigades Youth Wildlife Education and Leadership Development Program is under way.

Youth are taught leadership skills and natural resources conservation at the camps, each of which are limited to 20-30 students from ages 13 through 17, said Dr. Dale Rollins, Texas AgriLife Extension wildlife specialist at San Angelo and the concept's originator.

"The camps are designed to develop life skills such as critical thinking and team-building

through fun and interesting activities that focus on a particular game species," Rollins said.

Camp dates and locations are:

- 12th Battalion South Texas Buckskin Brigade: Carrizo Springs, June 5-9
- 19th Battalion Rolling Plains Bobwhite Brigade: Coleman, June 18-22
- 14th Battalion South Texas Bobwhite Brigade: Campbellton, June 26-30
- 6th Battalion Bass Brigade, Santa Anna, July 11-15

• 10th Battalion North Texas Buckskin Brigade: Albany, July 17-21

"Parents love the program", said Helen Holdsworth, San Antonio-based Texas Brigades executive director. "They appreciate the level of education offered by the wildlife and natural resource professionals, as well as the challenges presented to the participants. We offer a high quality, unique experience for the students," she added.

Tuition is \$400 per cadet per camp, but sponsors are avail-

able to provide financial aid when needed.

This year, TSA is getting involved in the program by providing two \$300 sponsorships for area youth who wish to attend one of the camps.

Applications may be completed online or downloaded at www.texasbrigades.org. The deadline is April 1.

For more information, contact Holdsworth at hholdsworth@texas-wildlife.org or Kassi Scheffer at kscheffer@texas-wildlife.org or call 800-TEX-WILD or 210-826-2904.

Austin County deer hunting through the years

By HERBERT KOLLATSCHNY

When the von Roeder family arrived in what today is Cat Spring, Austin County in 1834 what they found was much like Frederick Ernst described it when he arrived in the Industry area in 1831. They didn't find any modern conveniences, but what they did find was a vast wilderness abounding in wild game and birds of many species.

In a letter written back to their relatives in Germany, the early-arriving von Roeders, explain that they had arrived in a land of luscious green grasses, beautiful wild flowers, numerous species of wild animals that made hunting possible just a few steps from their campsite.

They set up camp near a clear spring, which they used for their water supply. Bear tracks were visible on all occasions, although the bears were not always seen. Night sounds of panthers corresponded with daytime tracks. Deer abounded in large herds, and the beautiful animals were harvested for food as necessary.

Smaller animals such as squirrels, rabbits, raccoons, opossums and skunks provided food or hides for clothing. Wild turkeys, prairie chickens, partridges, blackbirds, swallows, mockingbirds, cardinals, larks, owls, crows, hawks, sparrows, buzzards, bats, pigeons and hummingbirds graced the prairies or sang their sweet songs in the forests.

According to the letter they also found rattlesnakes, water moccasins, copperheads, scorpions, tarantulas and razorbacks as they slithered or stalked their ways around, adding awe to this untamed land.

Those settlers also found Kickapoo Indians that had lived on and with those very species for no telling how many generations before white man arrived. And they taught the settlers how to utilize those game animals for food and harvest them only as necessary.

All went well for many years but as more and more settlers arrived wildlife populations began to decline. Bears and panthers were soon gone from the area. And after the turn of the century, there was only a small population of whitetail deer left.

Stories have been handed down that during the Great Depression, hunters moved into an area during the winter months and set up camp. They brought along their

hunting hounds, curing salt and wooden barrels. An area was hunted until it was depleted of game and then they moved on.

The hides were stretched and cured for selling while the meat from selected animals was salt-cured for food.

Very little land was fenced and while there were landowners with large acreages, there were also those many small tracts owned for fuel, lumber and fence posts by farmers throughout the area. As a result, patrolling those lands was almost impossible.

The trespassers could claim they had permission from just about anyone and it was difficult to prove otherwise.

On Sunday, Jan. 22, 1933, a meeting of landowners was called at the Jacobi windmill to form a conservation organization to protect the small numbers of wildlife that remained.

The location was chosen because it centralized the wooded areas between Cat Spring, Millheim, Bellville and New Ulm. That first meeting attracted 60 landowners and was called to order by Charlie Hassler of Cat Spring. There was another theory behind having the meeting at such a remote location. That one was because in 1933 the country was still under prohibition and when Germans and Czech descendents met there was usually home brew. And they didn't want any nose federal agents snooping around.

Hassler introduced State Game Warden Tom Waddell and he explained how a conservation organization could work.

That was the beginning of the Austin County Game and Fish Protective Association ACG&FPA. They adopted a constitution and a set of by laws and they meant business.

Those having a big hand in starting the association were George and Emil Cornelius, Walter Hillboldt, Charlie Schauerhammer, Hassler, Johnny Peschel, A.G. Aurich, Leo Kveton and Joe Malicek.

Landowners pooled their property and set strict bag limits, appointed patrolmen and agreed to allow all patrolmen access to their land. That day 60 joined and more than 30,000 acres were included in the management area.

The largest landowners signing up that day were Charlie and Jessie Hassler, 6,000

acres; Henry, Lawrence and August Huber, 3,650 acres; Walter and Louis Hillboldt 3,000, acres; A.H. Stuessel 1,250, acres; R.H. Haynes, 1,100 acres; Walter Schneider, 1,500 acres; and the Louis Estate, 1,200 acres.

The association continued to grow and at one time included well over 100,000 acres in its jurisdiction.

Deer herds began to re-establish. After some years Austin County's hunting area was in high demand for leasing because of its nearness to Houston and abounding deer herds.

Much of that growth of the deer herds was the result of the conservation effort by the association as well as a new resident game warden Gene Hargett.

After WWII, many of the returning veterans tried their hands in farming and the small family farms were just what the Whitetail deer were looking for. It provided an abundance of food and the herds grew in leaps and bounds.

From a period when there were almost no deer, soon they were so many that it was almost impossible to farm because of their feeding on the crops.

Hundreds of acres of native timberland had been cleared for livestock grazing. That took away many acorn producing oak trees along with underbrush that supplied succulent forbs so important to a deer's diet.

Fields that used to produce corn, peanuts, peas and watermelons were sprigged in Coastal Bermuda grass taking away more food that deer, unfortunately, depended on.

During the early 1960s ACG&FPA was approached with a petition containing 61 names of people complaining about deer destroying their crops. They insisted that they could no longer farm because of the deer.

The association wouldn't budge because some of the petitioners were not farmers. As a result complaining farmers took matters into their own hands and slaughtered deer by pickup loads. The meat was left for vultures to feast upon or to rot. This brought about even more controversy.

The overpopulation was evident in the poor quality, low weight deer with inferior antler development in the Austin County

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STEVE ALLEMAN, a TSA member from Katy, poses with this fine archery deer taken Nov. 2 last year in Wisconsin.



TSA MEMBER KYLE SCOTT is shown with a free-ranging buck he shot on his family ranch.

REPORT GAME VIOLATIONS:
Texas:
1-800-792-GAME
Nationwide:
1-800-800-9273

*2010 Fall Fund Raiser
 Attendance Prize Donors*

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 (PLEASE PRINT) New Renewal Address Change

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I AGREE TO SUPPORT THE GOALS OF TEXAS SPORTSMAN'S ASSOCIATION

SIGNATURE _____

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Texas Sportsman's Association
MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

DUES: Annual \$ 5.00
 Life (Onetime) \$200.00

DONATION TO:
 TEXAS SPORTSMAN'S ASSN. \$ _____

TOTAL AMOUNT ENCLOSED: \$ _____

DUES PAYABLE TO:
 TEXAS SPORTSMAN'S ASSOCIATION
 P.O. BOX 26
 COLUMBUS, TEXAS 78934

***To all landowners and managers
in Colorado County:***

It is with a heavy heart that I inform you that I have accepted a promotion within the Texas Parks & Wildlife Department to now serve as the Big Game Program Specialist effective Feb. 1.

When I transferred to Colorado County I had planned to stay in this position until I retired. However, things don't always go as planned. I felt that this new job was a positive step that I couldn't pass up.

I will still be living in Colorado County and will still be an active member of Sandy Creek WMA. I will be doing my best to help keep the county activities up and running until a replacement is found.

During the gap between my departure and the new biologist being hired you can direct any question and needs to:

David Forrester, 979-968-6591 dforr@cmaaccess.com.

It has been a true pleasure working with you and I look forward to seeing you in the future.

Sincerely,

Ryan Schoeneberg



TSA MEMBER BRADLEY GOHLKE took this nice buck while bowhunting in Pike County, Ill.

See you at the
Texas Sportsman's Association
SPRING BUSINESS MEETING
Sunday, March 6 - Mentz Hall
*Buck's Famous Beef Stew at 11,
followed by the meeting!*



EDDIE RAY LUX took this 8-pointer with a 14-3/4 inch spread at 5:30 p.m. on Nov. 14. He used a .243 Sako Model 73.

Business Meeting

(Continued from Page 1)

zine in FY 12, but most funding is reinstated in FY 13.)

- Reduce Information Technology divisional funding by \$1.6 million in FY 12 (25%) and \$1.4 million in FY13 (22%).

- Reduce state park funding by \$13.6 million in FY 12 (18%) and \$11.2 million in FY 13 (15%)

- Reduce law enforcement funding by \$5.2 million (11%) in FY 12 and \$4.5 million (9%) in FY 13

- Reduce Inland fisheries \$2million (12%) in FY 12 and \$1.8 million (11%) in FY 13

- Reduce coastal fisheries \$1.5 million (10%) in FY 12 and \$1.4 million (9%) in FY 13

- Reduce wildlife division \$4.5 million (18%) in FY 12 and \$2.6 million (11%) in FY 13

- Reduce infrastructure funding by \$900K in FY 12 and FY 13 (15%)

- Reduce grant administration by 50%.

Deer hunting in Austin Co.

(Continued from Page 5)

herds. A thinning was needed, especially doe deer. Along with more controversy, the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department implemented an antler-less season for Austin County. Permits were issued and after several seasons of thinning, doe seasons were eliminated.

As the herds repopulated there remained a problem. With a buck-only limit, too many young bucks were being harvested before they could reach maturity. And a ratio of too few bucks to does was becoming a problem.

With cooperation and encouragement from several cooperative organizations in the county, the TPWD set a new standard for harvesting buck deer.

In Austin County there are several restrictions, but the one that has been the most successful is a buck must have at least a 13-inch inside spread before he is legal. Today Austin County hunters are harvesting the best antlered bucks in history.

But we are also beginning to

hear complaints of deer overpopulation in some areas of the county. There are already means of getting antler-less permits for some of those areas. And no doubt, there will be conflicting opinions of whether or not it is necessary.

There also appears to be a change of opinion on the value of a deer population. Much of Austin County is being divided into small acreages for home sites.

In the past, many believed those newcomers took advantage of the abundance of deer and illegally harvested them for meat. Maybe a bit of that continues to take place.

But today the overall consensus is that most of those folks look at the whitetail deer as a charming addition to their landscape and provide year around feeders. This enables them to watch, photograph and enjoy their beauty and look at their presence as an asset. And that gives the herds an even better chance to grow and thrive.

Business Meeting

(Continued from Page 1)

Vollmer, our guest speaker, has been serving Texas since 2001 as a Staff Forester with the Texas Forest Service. She graduated from Purdue University in 1999 with a Bachelor of Science in Forestry as a wildlife management major.

She spent the first two years after college teaching hands-on environmental education to children of all ages and adults. She was brought on board with the Texas Forest Service in 2001 as a Survey Forester for seven southeast

counties.

She has since moved into the district office located on the W.G. Jones State Forest in Conroe. She became a Certified Arborist in 2009 and she is a Certified Master Naturalist.

She continues to have a passion for teaching environmental education to adults and kids. She works closely with landowners in Liberty, Harris, Montgomery, and Waller counties, helping them manage their natural resources for now and into the future.



THIS BUCK was taken with a bow and arrow in Edwards County by Blake Rosenbaum, son of TSA member Steven Rosenbaum. The trophy had 13 points and scored 166-6/8 with Boone & Crockett.

Mexican violence

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can must go there with the right attitude. You are a guest in a foreign country. We cross at the Columbia Bridge and bring our hunters in before noon. Then we go to our destination and stay there the duration of the hunt. There's no sense in going where the bad element may exist. We don't crack a jug until we're on the ranch and we lock the gate behind us. Any mordido to the federales stopped with the North American Free Trade Agreement. Now, every rancher must be a member of the ANGADI (Asociacion Nacioanl De GanaDeros Diversificados Criadores De Fauna). It's not expensive and they are a buffer between the hunter and the government. They make it easy to cross our hunters' guns. As for hunting in Mexico, if you're not involved in drug trafficking you won't have a problem."

The ANGADI is an association of more than 1500 landowners holding more than 25 million acres. Its mission is to promote and obtain knowledge for the preservation and sustainable harvesting of wildlife as a fundamental pillar of the cultural, ecological and economic heritage of Mexico. The ANGADI also advises the federal government on general wildlife laws and regulations.

The translator called two weeks ago.

"Hey, do you remember our trip and running into those fellas with guns?" he asked.

"Yeah, that was sort of different," I said.

"Well, those guys were part of the Zeta Cartel."

"I figured they were with somebody."

"The word on the street is that there were 17 of them living in that old hacienda, and the Gulf Cartel wiped them out. They're all dead!"

"So what does that mean? Is it safe to go hunting?"