

TEXAS SPORTSMAN'S NEWS

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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."



LARRY BOZKA gave an interesting, well-received talk at the TSA's annual Spring Business Meeting on March 1 in Columbus.



LORIS GALLOWAY III entertained members and guests before the annual Spring Business Meeting, singing a variety of popular country favorites.

Why TSA?

Grassroots organization working well with others promoting variety of issues

By **HERMAN W. BRUNE**

The Texas Sportsman's Association (TSA) is primarily made up of grassroots rural folks concerned about wildlife conservation and private property rights. This is in line with the endeavors of the Texas Wildlife Association (TWA) and the loose-knit coalition of conservation groups across the state known as the Texas Outdoor Partners (TOP).

Through close communication, and the leadership of TWA, these groups work together giving a voice to the people who have meant the most to conservation in Texas – hunters, anglers, and landowners. Unlike certain national organizations that receive funding from uninformed and solicited urbanites, Texas conservation groups are vocal and effective in their 1st amendment, 2nd amendment, and conservation policies.

According to TWA Vice President Kirby Brown, Texans are fortunate to have a legislature that respects hunters and anglers.

"When you put all the conservation groups together, you walk into legislators' offices with a lot of representation," says Brown. "They want to work with Texas hunters and anglers."

One of the bills under scrutiny had to do with landowners' hunting rights when annexed by a municipality. By working with Senator Shapiro the buffer zone around commercial properties, sporting arenas and subdivisions was worked out. So, people could still hunt rural property if annexed by a city.

"On the animal cruelty issues, we were able to exempt a lot of language from bills that would have affected wildlife and agriculture. These bills were said to be meant for urban pets, but the terminologies would have had far reaching effects into hunting, fishing, and agriculture practices," said Brown. "That was actually in the last session. We worked out the terminologies and the animal cruelty people said they were satisfied and would never come back. Then – low and behold they filed another five or six bills in this session.

The puppy mill bill, by Representative Senfronia Thompson, was such an animal cruelty law. The bill ended up dying. There

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TSA Fall Fundraiser slated for Sept. 27 at Mentz Hall

The Texas Sportsman's Association 2009 Fall Fundraiser will be held Sunday, September 27 at Mentz Hall.

Activities will begin at 11 a.m. and a catered meal will be served at noon. Cost of the meal is \$7.50 per person. A silent auction and penny raffle are planned and attendance door prizes will be given throughout the event. Drawing for the raffle prizes will be held at the end of the fundraiser.

Members are reminded to bring a dessert to be served with the meal. Anyone wishing to donate a silent auction item or door prizes will be greatly appreciated.

Please join us for this annual event and bring a friend who is interested in learning more about the Texas Sportsman's Association.

**TEXAS
SPORTSMAN'S ASSOCIATION**
P.O. Box 26,
Columbus, TX 78934



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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

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**Coyotes decimating
deer herds; what can
can be done about it?**

BY WALT GLASSCOCK

Scott Bestul wrote a great article in the June 2009 issue of Field and Stream about two recent studies regarding the impact coyotes have on fawn recruitment (the number of fawns that enter the herd). Coyotes are a recent problem in parts of the South, East and Northeast states. Most of the hunters in these areas are unaware of the extreme impact coyotes are having.

John C. Kilgo with the USDA conducted a study from 2006-08 in which researchers implanted vaginal radio transmitters in pregnant does. At birth the transmitter dropped with the fawn. Researchers then captured the newborn fawn and fitted it with a monitor. When the fawn died the researchers were then able to DNA studies on the remains to ID the killer.

Of 60 monitored fawns, 44 died in the first eight weeks. Death score was as follows: 1 abandonment, 2 by unknown predators, 6 by bobcats, 28 by coyotes and 7 probables. Including the seven probables, coyotes accounted for 80 percent of the mortality.



The second study cited by Bestul and done by Brent Howze and Robert Warren with the University of Georgia was done on a 29,000-acre area with a low fawn-to-doe ratio. Researchers removed 23 coyotes from an 11,000-acre study block from January to August 2009. On a 7,000-acre control block of similar habitat no coyotes were removed. By Fall the smaller 7,000-acre block with the coyotes untouched had a .07-to-1 fawn ratio. On the block where the predators had been trapped the ratio was .72-to-1.

Dr. Carl V. Miller, the supervisor of the University of Georgia study, said: "Coyote predation is the big issue right now; it's something we must take more seriously in whitetail management going forward."

Two years ago one of our former TSA members in West Virginia was visiting with an old work associate who said to Keith, "What are we going to go about these coyotes?" Upon further inquiry, our friend Keith Casteel learned that his friend had found a coyote den and placed a trail camera near the den. Late that Spring the coyotes brought a fawn to their pups 29 out of 31 days.

Steps to take: 1) Deer need thicker/taller grass habitat for hiding their fawns that many of our over-grazed and drought-ridden pastures provide. 2) More bucks needed so that does are bred in a timely fashion. 3) If fawns all drop in a shorter span of time there is a narrower window of opportunity for coyotes to kill young deer. 4) Keep killing coyotes to keep their numbers in check.

Texas dove, teal seasons approved for 2009-10

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service SRC (Service Regulation Committee) has approved the 2009-10 Texas dove season, including a 70-day season and 15-bird daily bag statewide, and a 16-day early teal season.

Additionally, the SRC approved moving the Texas South Zone dove season opening the Friday nearest Sept. 20, but no earlier than the 17th. This year the season will open Sept. 18.

Dove season in the North and Central Dove Zones will run from Tuesday, Sept. 1 through Sunday, Oct. 25 and reopen Saturday, Dec. 26 through Sunday, Jan. 9, with a 15-bird bag and not more than two white-tipped doves.

The South Zone dove season will run Sept. 18-Nov. 3, reopening Dec. 26-Jan. 17 with a 15-bird bag and not more than two white-tipped doves.

Possession limit is twice the daily bag for all migratory game birds except light geese, which currently do not have a possession limit.

The Special South Texas White-winged Dove Area will open to white-winged dove afternoon-only (noon to sunset) hunting the first two full week-



GOOD SHOOTIN'! — The Bellville High School mixed shooting team walked off with third place honors in the 2nd Annual Ag Clays 381 State Trap Shoot held recently at the Hill Country shooting Sports Range in Kerrville. Pictured from left are Garrett Rinn, Brittney Klein, Collyn Tiemann, Meghan Sandoval and Tanner Vacha. Tiemann and Rinn are TSA members. Overall, 121 shooters competed in boys, girls and mixed competition.

ends in September running from Sept. 5-6 and 12-13 and reopen when the regular South Zone season begins on Friday, Sept. 18 through Tuesday, Nov. 3 and again from Saturday, Dec. 26 through Wednesday, Jan. 13. The Special White-winged Dove Area season takes four of the allowable 70

days, so when the regular season opens, this area most close four days earlier than the rest of the South Zone. The daily bag limit is 15 birds, not more than four mourning doves during the first two weekend splits and 2 white-tipped doves. Once the general season opens, the aggregate bag limit will be 15.

The Service also approved a proposal to give TPWD the option to adjust a portion of the boundary of the Special White-winged Dove Area. This change would remove portions of Jim Hogg and Starr counties.

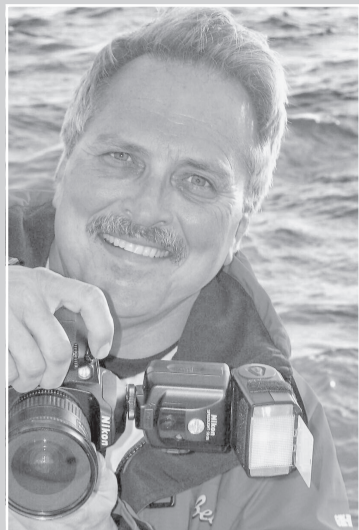
The 16-day September teal season will run Sept. 12-27.

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last	first	
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		<input type="checkbox"/> New <input type="checkbox"/> Renewal <input type="checkbox"/> Address Change
ADDRESS _____		EXP. DATE _____
CITY _____	STATE _____	ZIP _____
TELEPHONE () _____	DATE _____	
I AGREE TO SUPPORT THE GOALS OF TEXAS SPORTSMAN'S ASSOCIATION		
SIGNATURE _____		
SPONSOR SIGNATURE _____		

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	



Picking a fishing guide By LARRY BOZKA

There are literally hundreds of professional fishing guides in the State of Texas, some of whom got into the business as just that ... a business ... and others who are simply looking for a way to justify a hardcore fishing habit.

It's the former who survive, and sometimes even thrive. But they do so knowing that theirs is an entertainment business, and that their job is every bit as much about meeting customers' expectations as it is about filling a half-gallon

freezer bag with fresh trout fillets.

I've been fishing with, and photographing, professional guides for well over 30 years. Across the board, theirs is a bona fide "people business." Many have told me that their primary challenge is learning exactly what the paying customers expect out of their day on the water. All too few of those customers make their expectations apparent prior to the trip. The result,

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Texas Sportsman's Association Scholarship Application

IMPORTANT! Please verify and complete all the information on this application. You may attach supporting materials that will help the Selection Committee learn more about your commitment to education. The application and attached materials become the property of the TSA.

Name:	Phone:
Address:	City:
School Name:	Address:

ACT	SAT	CLASS RANK	SIZE OF CLASS	GPA	GRADE LEVEL

Honors/Awards:

School Activities/Leadership Positions:

Special Interests, Hobbies, etc.

In 100 words or less, describe your higher education goals. How will achieving these goals benefit you?

Applicant's Signature: _____ **Parent/Guardian Signature:** _____

**Mail your application to: Texas Sportsman's Association/Scholarship Application
P.O. Box 26
Columbus, TX 78934-0026**

TSA establishes 2 \$500 scholarships at annual meeting

At the annual Business Meeting on March 1, 2009, the Texas Sportsman's Association membership approved the establishment of two \$500 scholarships. Following are the guidelines to used in applying for the scholarships:

Eligibility

- Applicant must be a U.S. citizen.
- Applicant must have a cumulative high school grade point average of at least 2.5 on a 4.0 scale.
- Applicant must be enrolled in a U.S. college, university or technical school as a full time student.
- Applicant must be a TSA member or a child, stepchild or grandchild of a TSA member.

General Policy

- Scholarship committee will be comprised of three TSA directors and two active, impartial TSA members. The committee's selections are made on the basis of scholastic achievement, character and financial need.
- A maximum of two \$500 scholarships or scholarship renewals will be awarded annually.
- Each scholarship awarded is renewable if the committee decides that the student's record justifies the renewal. Scholarship recipients who wish to apply for renewal will be required to submit a copy of their college grade report to the selection committee.
- Scholarship checks will be issued to recipients after proof of enrollment is provided to the TSA scholarship committee.
- Application deadline is Jan. 31.
- Successful applicants will be announced at the annual business meeting the first Sunday in March.

Looking Down from the Saddle

By
HERMAN W. BRUNE

1. The night air sifted through the giant screen window. My bare feet were braced against the wooden sill and my butt perched on the edge of Grandma's bed. She dozed and watched me. A single thin sheet covered her. My attention was riveted to the quiet goings on beneath the live oaks. A full moon glared silver light through the giant trees. The ground was a patchwork of glowing bright spots and dim shadows, but even the shadows gave way to the twinkling tails of fireflies. The southern breeze



blew against my young cheeks and my eyes strained to see the nocturnal secrets. My ears were full of the chirping songs of tree frogs and occasionally there would be the low moaning bellow of a cow or nickering call of one horse to another. If I was lucky there would be the shuffling scuttle of an armadillo rooting through leaves beneath the live oaks and in a flash the yard dog would educate the poor thing about Grandma's trespass laws. But mostly there was the silver moonlight and the dreamy enchanting aura of the night.

It caused stillness in a person and made a small boy's imagination run wild. It also filled me with something that never went away. Just like Sunday school and family gatherings filled me with respect and some wherewithal about the social order. The outdoor scene soothed a niche of my psyche, and for me, that niche turned out to be one of the biggest factors in my character.

Then there was a distant rumbling from the Glidden train yards and Grandma stirred.

"Herman Willie, are you still awake?"

"Yes m'am."

"Well, you better lie down and go to sleep pretty soon. You can't sit there until morning."

Of course I thought I could but knew I shouldn't.

"Herman Willie, do you see those red lights on the horizon?"

"Yes m'am, what are they?"

"Those are the towers on Rocky Hill and at Glidden. They're miles away but we can still see them. They haven't been there too many years and I don't like them. I think it's awful that they spoil our view."

I didn't know what to say. The towers were there before I came along and they were part of the world I knew. The red lights didn't particularly bother me. But according to Grandma's suggestion, I lay down and the southern breeze caressed me, the thin cotton sheet protected me, and I floated away to peaceful sleep.

2. My horse plodded down the trail kicking up a knee-deep dust cloud. Behind, seven loaded mules trudged along bobbing their heads, swishing their trails, and dripping frothy sweat. I rocked in the saddle and surveyed my surroundings. Then I shot a fast thin stream of tobacco juice at a rock. My hat was kicked back and though my clothes were caked with dirt my posture was straight but loose. Something about being a mule packer and

The view

living in the wilderness makes a guy feel great. It's as if you know there isn't much that can be thrown your way that you can't

handle. Grizzly bears, stubborn mules, sleeping on the ground, and taking care of tinhorn guests are all in a day's chores.

My mind drifted and I wondered at the dying forest. Pine beetles are destroying much of the woodlands and watersheds of the Pacific Northwest and Canada. Hundreds of square miles are a tinderbox waiting for the perfect lightening storm and wind to burn a major portion of North America. When I asked why the beetles weren't sprayed, I was told that this was wilderness. Come what may there would be no man-made tampering to eradicate the beetles. Whatever happened would be the natural course for Mother Nature. What a shame, the green mountains are fading to the hues of death.

Then my horse turned a corner and stopped. The trail cut close to the South Fork of Birch Creek and in front of me stood another problem. It was a young man wearing a Forest Service shirt, short pants, a pony tail, and an earring. Obviously this was one of those ranger breeds from the East Coast, California, or Disneyland. He seemed busy.

"Howdy, what are you doing?"

"I'm checking to see what sort of fish are in this creek. If they aren't West Slope Cut Throats we're going to have to shock this creek and remove all the fish."

The sight of the jackass school boy irked me and I wanted to thrash him. I knew the creek was full of rainbow trout, as well as, cut throat. Instead, I held my tongue and rode around him. His presence was a static disruption in the smooth vibrations of the mountain climate. The double standard of killing trout but not beetles was heinous. I rode away and didn't look back at him – I couldn't stand the sight of him.

3. It was an escape. My daughter, Sam, had business to settle in Albuquerque and we were enjoying our road trip. We drove west on I-10 and getting past San Antonio was a treat. We both love the vistas and openness of West Texas. The rocky terrain, rolling hills, mesas, and desert hold a different type of beauty that contrasts our native Post Oak Savannah. Then near Iraan we started seeing the windmills. The first few looked novel and cute. Then there were long rows of them against the sky line for miles and miles.

"Sam, what do you think of that?"

"I don't know Dad."

"Well, it's a sign of the times but I don't think those things will ever produce a nickel's worth of energy. They had to be subsidized to get here. I wish the landowners well, but if this country was worth \$50 an acre before — it ain't worth five cents a mile now."

Something in my gut twisted. I knew this would be the world that coming generations witness. The slow moving vanes smacked of a contemporary artist's concept thrust against the backdrop of Mother Nature's West Texas. No, I'll be like Grandma remembering when there were no red lights on the horizon. And I'll wish for the days when I may view the landscape and not see man's presumptuous mark.

Attention: Austin County TSA members

The 2009 Fall Fund-raiser will NOT be held in Industry as reported at the last county meeting. The big event WILL take place at Mentz.

Please make this change in your calendars.

See you in Mentz on Sept. 27 for an enjoyable day.



DO YOU KNOW THIS CUTIE? — This junior TSA member dressed up as Daisy Duke for the Miss Relay Contest held during the Relay for Life in Columbus. Any idea who this might be?

Editorials published in the TSA newsletter may contain opinions of the author not necessarily endorsed by the Texas Sportsman's Assn.

TSA members are encouraged to submit stories, a photo or editorials for possible inclusion in future newsletters.

TSA welcomes new members

The Texas Sportsman's Association welcomes new memberships. Dues are only \$5 per year, and memberships run from Jan. 1 to Dec. 31 of each year except for lifetime memberships. All TSA memberships expire on Dec. 31 each year.

Simply cut out the application form on page 3, enclose the fee, address an envelope to TSA, P.O. Box 26, Columbus, TX 78934, stamp it and put it in the mail! You may also sign up online at <http://www.texassportsmansassociation.org>.

TPWD cancels 2009 Expo due to sponsorship decline

The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department is canceling the Texas Parks and Wildlife Expo set for Oct. 3-4 in Austin. The event was cancelled due to a decline in sponsorship revenue related to the economic recession.

The agency will expand efforts in 2010 to support similar events around the state.

For more information refer to the events calendar on the TPWD web site.

Clean water from the Oil Patch: producers, politicians looking at solutions to environmental issue

By HERMAN W. BRUNE

The Clean Water Act is under scrutiny in the U.S. Congress, and the National Wildlife Federation (NWF), has jumped on the bandwagon promoting the Act and telling the energy industry it must "come clean" in the name of hunters and anglers.

At closer inspection the Act has problems concerning private property rights, and looking at the NWF website, it is doubtful that the quasi-conservation group represents hunters and anglers.

Fortunately the Texas legislature is more transparent than the federal government, and the local conservation groups are honest about their agendas. Then, to almost make the world perfect, energy production companies, aka the oil patch, are using new technology to conserve freshwater.

The Barnett Shale covers 12-15 counties south and west of Fort Worth. It is a tight clay formation with a high production of natural gas. There are other such formations in Arkansas, West Virginia, New York, and Pennsylvania.

The reason that the focus is on Texas is because of the amount of water it takes to produce the natural gas, the shortage of water in the area, and because the lack of water was affecting the ability to expand gas production.

According to Mark Wilson, marketing manager for General Electric Water Process Technologies, it takes about three million gallons of freshwater to fracture a gas well and bring it into production.

"When a well goes into production the water used to frac that well comes back up," said Wilson. "That water is three times saltier than ocean water and is un-useable."

"So what's happening is that they're using massive amounts of freshwater and then having to dispose of it down

injection wells, where it's never seen again. There's about five billion gallons being used a year — we started addressing that issue.

"The other part of that problem is trucking. All that brine must be hauled to disposal wells. When they're bringing in a well a day, and each truck hauls 5,000 gallons, the city of Fort Worth has about 27,000 miles put on the infrastructure daily.

"The good news is everybody wants to do the right thing. The technology hasn't been out there long to fix the problem, but now the producers and our legislators in Austin are taking a fresh look at this situation.

The Texas Speaker of the House sent a mandate to the Energy Resource Committee to find a way to put this technology to use and to start re-using the water.

"In actuality, we can save about 70 percent of the water that comes back up the well. This water could go into aquifer replenishment, it could go into surface water and streams, or it could be put back to work in the next hydraulic fracturing. Wherever you put it, it is water that's being used again and saving the necessity of using freshwater. It also cuts the mileage on your infrastructure in about half. This helps the environment, the economy, and the political situation."

In Texas, this technology is coming at a time when the Texas Water Development Board is wrestling with the water shortage for Dallas and Fort Worth. It helps with the Trinity and Brazos River Valleys where there are more strains being put on freshwater resources for downstream municipal use, and it helps solve worries about freshwater reaching Gulf Coast bays and estuaries.

Aug. 2-4, Texas A&M is holding a Separation Sciences short course

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TEXAS SPORTSMAN'S ASSOCIATION RAFFLE

The TSA raffle will be held at 3 p.m. during the Fall Fundraiser Sept. 27 at Mentz. All members are encouraged to sell tickets. Tickets can be obtained by contacting any of the following:

- L.J. & Doris Rinn, New Ulm – 979 357 2220
- Terrel Maertz, Alleyton – 979 732 5339
- Buck Kollmann, Bellville – 979 865 3811
- Charles Abel, Sealy – 979 885 2719
- David Wade, Cat Spring – 979 865 9769
- Brandee Froebel, Bellville – 979 865 8046
- Diane Boehme, New Ulm – 979 992 2919
- Shane Scherbig, Sealy – 832-731-9943
- Leslie Heinsohn, Frelsburg –979-732-5081
- Mary Lou Henneke, Cat Spring – 979 732 5349

Below is a list of raffle prizes and the donors:

PRIZE	DONOR
1. Savage 116-243 Accu-Trigger	T.S.A. (\$620 value)
2. Weatherby Vanguard Sporter 270	T.S.A. (\$600 value)
3. Remington SPR 310 20 ga. Over & Under	T.S.A. (\$460 value)
4. Remington 870 Express 12 ga. 3"	T.S.A. (\$390 value)
5. Savage 93 17 HMR	T.S.A. (\$310 value)
6. \$300 Gift Certificate	Heinsohn's Store (\$300 value)
7. Ruger 10-22	T.S.A. (\$285 value)
8. Leupold Vari-X 1 3x9 Scope	T.S.A. (\$270 value)
9. Hand-made Quilt	T.S.A. (\$250 value)
10. Lifetime Membership	T.S.A. (\$200 value)
11. Rod & Reel Combo	T.S.A. (\$125 value)
12. \$100 Gift Card-Academy	Trafco - Eagle Lake
13. \$100 Savings Bond	Carmine State Bank
14. \$100 Savings Bond	Columbus State Bank
15. \$100 Savings Bond	1st National Bank-Bellville
16. 4 Bag Chairs	Industry State Bank-Industry & New Ulm
17. \$50 Wal-Mart Gift Card	J.W.V. Services-Sealy
18. 2 sets of T.S.A. Dominoes	Buck & Ora Dell Kollman
19. \$50 Bass-Pro Gift Card	Citizens State Bank-Sealy
20. 2 Bag Chairs	1st State Bank-Columbus
21. 11 Pc. Wrench Set	Washington County Tractor Co.
22. \$25 Gift Card	Lindemann Store
23. Ice Chest	Round Top State Bank



THIS QUEEN-SIZED QUILT will be one of the items in the big raffle drawing at the Fall Fundraiser in Mentz on Sept. 27.

Why TSA?

Continued From Page 1

are already laws pertaining to puppy mills. The tethering bill was another bill requiring that all dogs have a 10-by-15 kennel, and that no dogs could be tied. Through efforts by the TOP and TWA lobbyists, this bill was withdrawn by the legislator.

“We were stunned that SB 18, the eminent domain, was killed by Democrat chubbing,” said Brown. “But we’re happy that we got HJR14 the constitutional amendment for eminent domain, and we’re hopeful that everybody gets out and votes for that amendment.”

TSA signed on to numerous letters, concerning legislation, as a member of the TOP. There are approximately 60 groups in the TOP. Some of them are Texas Wildlife Association, Southwest Cattlemen’s Association, Texas Farm Bureau, Texas Forestry Association, National Wild Turkey Federation, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, Ducks Unlimited, Quail Unlimited, the Dallas Safari Club, the Houston Safari Club, Coastal Conservation Association, Texas Black Bass Unlimited, and Texas Deer Association – just to name a few.

Annual TSA Fall Fundraiser



Sunday,
Sept. 27,
2009

St. Roch Church Hall - Mentz

Fishing guides

Continued From Page 4

quite often, is disappointment and disillusionment, despite the fact that the “hired rod” did all he or she could do to make the outing successful and enjoyable. It’s an easy enough dilemma to avoid.

Before dropping anywhere from four to five hundred bucks or more for a paid day on the water, prospective clients are well-advised to take an honest look at their needs and desires and then effectively communicate those wishes to their chosen fishing pros.

In the case of hunting guides, the situation is far less complicated. Whether the quarry is ducks or deer, the guided hunt modus operandi is far more clearly defined than the typical guided fishing trip. There are countless angling options, ranging from beginner-level spincasting with dead bait to fly-casting hand-tied flies to visible flats fish. There is a pro to meet every need. But again, those needs should be clearly explained before a deposit check is mailed to a guide to “lock in” a date.

Foremost is simply the number of fishermen making the trip. Book a trip for two and show up with three or four anglers and it’s as sure as the tides that confusion, and understandably, considerable resentment and even the occasional cancelled outing will ensue. Also critical is the given level of expertise for each angler on the trip. A veteran fly-fishing pro will entertain uncomfortable company when hosting a person who has never picked up a rod and reel, much less an 8-weight fly rod. Worse yet, the guide often has no clear directive as to who is being accommodated ... the novice or the expert, the live bait fisherman or the accomplished artificial lure enthusiast. Just as a guide should be matched to a style of fishing, the paying anglers should be playing on relatively equal fields of expertise ... unless, of course, the directive is to teach the novice new skills. Every angler, no matter his degree of expertise, can learn a good deal in the course of a guided fishing trip.

The clients who get the most out of their paid ventures fully understand that concept, and accordingly, take advantage of the situation. Consider it an on-the-water how-to seminar. A good guide will invariably provide one, if only asked. Conversely, if the goal is primarily to catch fish, and as many fish as possible, a quality guide can quite often “put you on the fish.” He cannot, however, accommodate skill levels that do not exist.

A trip to Rockport with fly-fishing guide Capt. Mike Scott that I made around five years ago brought that point to mind. It had been over a year since I had picked up a fly rod, and I was raring to go the second I stepped atop the casting platform on Scott’s tunnel-hulled Maverick flats boat.

“Before we go, I want to see you cast,” he said. “Okay,” I answered, not yet understanding his request. I stripped line from the reel, made a forceful backcast, and on the forward release (admittedly, with some relief) watched the chartreuse Clouser Minnow zip about 40 feet away. “Good deal,” Scott said succinctly. “Let’s go fishing.” I couldn’t help but ask him why he wanted the demonstration. “Because,” he answered, “if I need to get you within 20 feet of a fish for you to reach it with a fly, I need to know that now.” Fly-fishing is a somewhat

extreme example.

Still, my experience with Scott only reinforces the contention that guides must know not only what anglers want to do, but can do, before they leave the dock. Ask your potential pro the following questions before you book your next trip, and it’s much more likely to be an adventure that you will fondly recall for years to come.

How many fishermen can you accommodate?

Will you take kids, and if so, how young?

Do you provide food and drinks?

How long do you fish? (Trips are usually booked as either “half-day” or “full-day” outings.)

What kind of tackle do you use ... spinning, fly or baitcasting?

Do you provide it, or should we bring our own? (Virtually every guide with whom I have fished provides tackle for his clients.)

Do you fish with natural bait, artificial lures, or both? Sometimes either or both are provided as part of the trip. There might be, however, an extra charge. Always find out up-front.

Will we be fishing out of the boat or wade-fishing?

If wading, do we need to bring our own accessories (waders, wading belts and wade-fishing boots)? The answer to the latter is often “Bring your own,” especially since belts, and especially wading boots have to fit the size and dimensions of the individuals who wear them.

Do you fish? (On paid trips, fish taken by a guide are either released or count against the customers’ “boat limits.”)

And lastly, but definitely as important as any question you might ask: Will you teach me how to fish?

From casting to catching to cleaning, again, that’s an important consideration for anglers who want to get the most for their money. A guide’s ability to find and catch fish is arguably no more important to a paying customer than said pro’s ability to pass on knowledge.

Any way you approach it, a guided fishing trip represents an investment. Ultimately, the degree of return received by the customer is dictated by the customer’s willingness to ask the right questions. No matter your level of expertise, the answers you gain will serve you well throughout a lifetime hardcore fishing habit of your own.

Larry Bozka is a versatile and well-known outdoor journalist, publisher and conservationist. He was the guest speaker at the TSA meeting last spring in Columbus.

Clean water

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discussing desalination and new water process technologies. This year, there will be seminars discussing desalination and the environment.

For more information call Connie Conaway (979) 845-2272.