

TPWD: Deer population same as last year

By MAT TAYLOR
Special Correspondent

Texas Parks and Wildlife Department biologists recently conducted spotlight deer surveys in Lampasas and surrounding counties. The surveys were carried out at night along a specified 15-mile section of county roads.

Derrick Wolter, TPWD wildlife biologist for Lampasas, Bell and Coryell counties, said after studying data from the surveys he estimated the deer population in Lampasas County to average about one deer per 20 acres countywide. This translates to approximately 23,000 white-tailed deer in the county, about the same as last year.

"However, the number of deer per acre can vary widely depending upon the habitat," Wolter said. "Ranches with good habitat for deer will have a much higher density of deer."

The biologist said survey data indicates fawn survival for Lampasas County was about 50 percent, although many landowners are reporting rates as low as 20 percent. Surveys in the three-county area ranged from 20 to 65 percent fawn crop.



PHOTO BY MAT TAYLOR

According to recent TPWD spotlight surveys, the deer population for Lampasas County is virtually the same as last year. The Lampasas County deer population is estimated at more than 20,000, including this nine-point buck and doe.

"The smaller fawn crop can be attributed to the dry weather conditions this spring and summer," Wolter said.

For many years, the ratio of bucks to does has been a concern as there was only one buck for up to 10 does in some parts of the Hill

Country. The ratio seems to be improving, as the biologists observed one buck for every 2.5 does on their recent surveys.

Based on the surveys and deer population data, TPWD recommends that landowners try for a harvest of one buck per 150 acres and one doe per 65 acres.

From observations in the field, Wolter said deer body condition appears to be good despite the dry weather conditions. The exceptions would be does that raised twin fawns.

It also appears the antler development of bucks is below average, although many bucks have an antler spread more than the 13-inch inside spread required by antler restrictions.

Most bucks will sport antlers with less mass this year, and overall antler quality will be less than normal. From all observations, however, hunters will have a good opportunity to harvest their winter supply of venison.

Texas Parks and Wildlife biologists are available to assist landowners and managers develop wildlife management plans on their ranches.

Wolter can be contacted at (254) 501-4125.

Hunters should know the laws

Ignorance of the law is no excuse, and hunters are responsible for knowing the laws applicable to their sport.

What follows is an overview of major points of Texas hunting regulations. For complete hunting and fishing regulations, pick up a copy of the 2008-09 Texas Parks and Wildlife Outdoor Hunting and Fishing regulations. Copies are available wherever hunting and fishing licenses are sold.

It goes without saying that it is illegal to hunt or fish in Texas without a valid license and stamp endorsements. While hunting, the license must be carried on the hunter, and an individual cannot use another's license or tags.

Also, while hunting or fishing every individual age 17 or older must carry either a driver's license or a personal identification card issued by the Texas Department of Public Safety. Persons born after Sept. 2, 1971, must have with them their Hunter Education certification.

For all game and non-migratory birds, the legal hours to hunt are one-half hour before sunrise to one-half hour after sunset.

Hunters may not use rimfire ammunition to hunt white-tailed deer, mule deer and pronghorn antelope. Neither pellet guns nor air rifles are legal, and hunters may not use fully automatic firearms, silencers or sound suppressors.

It is illegal to fire over a property line unless the property owner has

granted written permission. Computer-assisted remote hunting and the use of artificial light also are forbidden. Exceptions are battery-powered scoping devices, archery pin sight lines and laser sights for legally blind hunters.

As of March 2008, the 40-pound minimum draw for longbows, compound bows or recurved bows to hunt big-game animals was lifted. Devices that allow a bow to be locked at full or partial draw are lawful during any season when lawful archery equipment may be used.

Crossbows may not be used during the archery season but may be used to hunt game and bird animals, except migratory birds, during a general hunting season. Telescopic sights are permitted on crossbows, but they must be equipped with a mechanical safety, have a stock not less than 25 inches in length, and have a minimum pull of 125 pounds.

After harvesting a deer or turkey, the correct tag from the hunting license must be completely filled out, the month and date cut out, and immediately attached to the animal. The tags must remain with the animal until it reaches its final destination and is fully processed.

Hunters must make every reasonable effort to retrieve any wounded game. A hunter may not, however, cross a property line without the landowner's permission. All edible
Please see HUNTERS, page 5



RANCH CONNECTION

SELLING RANCHES ALL OVER TEXAS



When you're ready for a real Texas ranch... You're going to need a connection.

260+/- Llano area Deer Ranch, high fenced!



737+/- Hamilton Cattle Ranch, \$2450/acre
123+/- acres joining this available!



COME TO THE SPECIALISTS IN FARMS AND RANCHES ALL OVER THE GREAT STATE OF TEXAS!



Brenda Oestreich

512-569-4055

www.ranchconnection.com

There's no better time to invest in LAND!