

Edwards Plateau region ranks as top deer producer

By MAT TAYLOR
Special Correspondent

The Edwards Plateau ecological region, also called the Hill Country, is known as the "Deer Factory of Texas." It supports the largest white-tailed deer population in the state and the U.S. This is reflected in the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department's estimated 2007-08 white-tailed deer harvest.

The Hill Country wildlife district is comprised of 25 counties in Central Texas. Lampasas and the surrounding counties of Burnet, Bell, Coryell and San Saba are included in the region.

Data shows that during the 2007-08 hunting season 176,074 hunters harvested 229,391 white-tailed deer in the Edwards Plateau region. This translated to 1.3 kills per hunter, the highest success ratio of any ecological region in the state. It is estimated that 7.4 deer were harvested per 1,000 acres -- also the highest of any region.

TPWD divides the state into 11 ecological regions. In addition to the Edwards Plateau, other regions are Pineywoods, Gulf Prairies, Post Oak Savannah, Blackland Prairies, Cross Timbers, South Texas Plains, Rolling Plains, High Plains and the Trans-Pecos.

The second-highest deer harvest region was the South Texas region

with a harvest of 100,018. The Pineywoods was third with 56,363 deer harvested. As expected, the lowest deer harvest occurred in the High Plains region with 1,160 and the Trans-Pecos with 1,508. These regions, however, have a substantial population of mule deer and pronghorn antelope.

For the entire state, 578,864 hunters harvested 512,852 white-tailed deer. That is a lot of deer, but the 2007-08 harvest was 85 percent of the 2006-07 harvest of 604,800 whitetails.

The harvest data also revealed there were 44,421 less white-tailed deer hunters in 2007-08. The reduction in hunters and the deer harvest could be a result of the excellent range conditions and good acorn crop in 2007. This probably reduced deer movement, and fewer deer came to corn feeders due to adequate food supplies. Also, warm weather conditions was another factor in the reduced kill.

There were 1,057,577 licensed hunters in the state, according to TPWD. In addition to deer hunters, this number includes dove, quail, turkey and small game hunters. There also are many people who purchase a license to support wildlife management but do not hunt.

The archery deer and turkey seasons take place a month before the regular season. According to TPWD

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PHOTO BY MAT TAYLOR

Most hunters hope to see this picture on the opening morning of deer season -- a legal wide-antlered buck that presents a classic broadside-shot opportunity.

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