



LEE COUNTY WILDLIFE ASSOCIATION



January 2006

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It's Time For The Annual Meeting

The annual meeting will be held at the Sons of Herman Hall south of Giddings off Hwy 77 and CR 223 on Friday, February 3rd. Social hour will get started at 5 p.m. and the meal around 6:30 p.m.

Come on out for some good barbecue and good fellowship. There will be plenty of door prizes and raffle items, so bring lots of money. Door prizes will be given throughout the evening so come early. In an effort to expedite giving out **so many prizes** we will ask that each family member sign in at their Co-op table to be eligible for door prizes. Meal tickets are

only \$5.00 for adults, and kids up through high school still eat free so bring the whole family. Tickets can be purchased at time of registration.

Slide shows of the big bucks shot in the six county area and the photos entered in the wildlife photo contest will be shown during the meal and in lieu of a main speaker.

Mark it on your calendar and be sure to attend. If you have some deer antlers or a mount you would like to share with the crowd, please bring it to be displayed.

Youth Shooting and Hunter Safety Event

The Lee County Wildlife Association and Texas Parks and Wildlife hosted a youth shooting and firearms safety event on Tuesday, October 11th at Nails Creek Park on Lake Somerville. Local high school students involved in wildlife and agriculture classes were invited to come out for a fun, safe, hands-on educational opportunity.

The objective of the event was to educate students about hunter ethics and safety and give them the opportunity to shoot different types of firearms and bows. The students were placed in small groups and rotated through eight stations where they received one-on-one instruction. The stations included: hunter and boater safety, a hunter ethics and safety trail, archery, shotgun, 22 pistol, 22 rifle, black powder rifle, and center-fire rifle. The students enjoyed a picnic lunch and many won door prizes donated by the Sportsman's Warehouse. The event was

a lot of fun and we are planning to make it an annual event.

Thanks to the help of the directors of the Lee County Wildlife Association, local Hunter Education Instructors (David Hempel and Rodger Wubbenhorst), area Wildlife Biologists, Game Wardens and Park Staff. Tremendous support was received Sportsman's Warehouse in Round Rock, and financial support from the Texas Wildlife Association and the Texas Game Wardens Association.



Wildlife Photo Contest

I haven't received any entries so far for this year's contest. Please get your photos in. We will be displaying the photos using a projection system, like the buck slide show shown each year, so more people will get to enjoy the photos. Another advantage to doing this is that you can submit your digital photos electronically, saving printing cost and simplifying delivery, you can just e-mail them to me at tpwbiologist@bluebon.net. You can enter as many photos as you like, jpeg format for digital or unframed 8 x 10's are preferred, but 4 x 6's will be accepted. Printed photos will be photographed or scanned for the presentation.

Rules: The photos must be of a live animal taken in Lee County during 2005. There are two categories, general (hand held camera) and trail camera.

Deadline: You must have your photos into the Lee County Extension Office or Greg Pleasant's office by January 9th.

The directors will be judging the photos and awards will be given at the annual meeting on February 3rd. Please have your name, which category (general or trail), phone number with or on the back of each photo. The association will not be responsible for returning photos, but you can make arrangements to pick them-up after they are digitized for the presentation.

Oldest Buck Contest

If you shot an old buck or a spike this season in Lee County, you are a current member of one of the coops and you registered your buck with Texas Parks and Wildlife you are eligible for participation.

If you have a buck you harvested in Lee Co. this year and I haven't checked it, it's not too late. Give me a call. I need to be able to see the deer's teeth to age it so it can not be frozen. Hunters who harvested a spike will have their names put into a drawing, so size or age doesn't matter.

The purpose of the current antler regulation is to allow more bucks to make it into older age classes by taking pressure off of the younger bucks. Hunters are encouraged to start learning to estimate the age of a buck by their physical characteristics and behavior before shooting them.

Please bring your antlers and mounts to put on display for all to see. We will have the display walls on hand.

Cost Sharing for Food Plots

There wasn't much rain this fall for winter food plots, but hopefully this spring will be better for planting. So don't forget to take advantage of the food plot seed reimbursement program. Members purchasing seed for wildlife food plots can receive up to \$25 dollars in reimbursement from the Wildlife Association in an effort to reward members for helping wildlife in Lee County and to possibly encourage others to do the same.

You can now purchase the seed from any retailer but the seed must be planted in Lee County to qualify. The deadline to have receipts to the Extension office for the spring is food plot seed will be May 1st.

We hope to continue this or similar programs in the future. **If you have any suggestions for other program ideas please share them with one of your directors.**

Time To Check Your Bird Boxes

February is the time to clean and repair your **bluebird boxes** for the new nesting season. Using predator guards and deterring fire ants are important steps in helping nesting success.

Starting in March, you can check boxes once a week and continue to do so through July. Just remember that when you see nest construction almost completed, do not disturb the box during the first three days of egg laying. After that you can check the box in the afternoon without bothering the female. The other critical period not to disturb the nest is just prior to the young leaving the box (when they are about 10 days old).

After the young birds leave, clean out the nest material so re-nesting can occur. Bluebirds will build new nests on top of old ones but this second nest is higher in the box and can be more easily reached by a predator like a cat or raccoon. After the last brood leaves in late summer, leave nesting material in the box over the winter. This old material provides insulation for birds taking refuge in the box on cold winter nights. Adult purple martins return to the same nest site each year and for this area, should arrive about the first week of March. Yearling birds (last year's young) begin arriving 4 to 6 weeks after the adults, and are the most likely to be looking for new and unoccupied houses. At new sites, don't open houses for three or four weeks after the adults arrive because house

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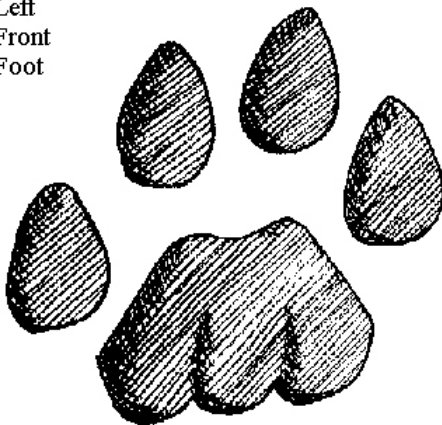
sparrows and starlings will have a month to claim the site before the yearlings arrive. Martin migration is drawn-out, with birds arriving over a span of 16-20 weeks. Martins can arrive and begin nesting as late as June, so keep your housing ready; don't close it up, or let other birds use it. Successful martin landlords do not tolerate non-native competitors.

Free Tree Seedlings

LCRA will once again be providing 500 free tree seedlings. Take the opportunity to get native tree species to plant on your property to provide additional food and cover for wildlife.

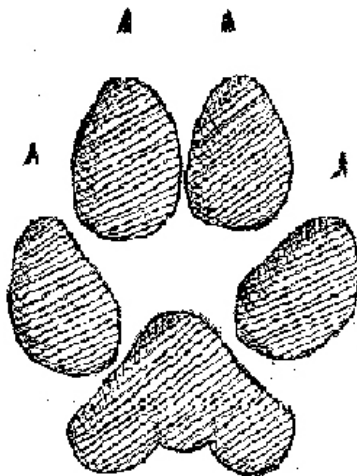
Track Identification

Left
Front
Foot



This is a
mountain
lion track

This is a
coyote



Lee County Bucks

By: Greg Pleasant


2005 was a really good year for deer hunters. Hunters in Lee County harvested some exceptional bucks and reported getting to witness lots of rutting activity and bucks fighting, and most hunters are now seeing enough bucks that they can be choosy about what to shoot and what to pass up. At the time of writing I have data on twelve bucks that score in the 120's, two in the 130's and three in the 140's. The highest scoring harvested buck has been a 4.5 year old 11 pointer that scored 148 7/8, and an impressive eight pointer scored 142 5/8. These bucks are good examples of what our local deer can do with good nutrition if they are allowed to get a little older.

White tailed deer reach physical maturity at 4.5 years of age, until then they are still building their skeletal structure. It's not until after this age that a buck has excess minerals and calcium to put into antler production and have an opportunity to really show their genetic potential. Most whitetails in the wild will grow their largest antlers at age 6.5 or 7.5. The majority of bucks shot in Lee County this year are still only 3.5 years old. Remember that next time you are trying to decide if that buck you are looking at is 13 inches wide but he is still young, pass him up. He will be even better next year.

Try to make agreements with your neighbors and work together to grow some mature trophy bucks that you will really be proud of. Set limits on how many bucks can be shot on your combined land. My recommendation is to only take one 13 inch or wider deer per 300 acres per year and all the unbranched antler bucks you see. There are several books and videos available on aging deer on the hoof. Take the time to educate yourself and any one hunting on your property. The biggest bucks in the county have been consistently produced in areas that groups of land owners exercise self control and not shooting some exceptional bucks until they get to 4 1/2 or 5 1/2 years old at least.

I know it is difficult to get enough landowners in a group to do this but wouldn't it be worth the effort to try? That's what a wildlife coop should be about, working together for the common good of the resource.

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