

2015-16 Texas Hunting, Fishing Licenses

AUSTIN — Sportsmen gearing up for the upcoming fall hunting seasons are reminded to renew their licenses for 2015-16, available starting Saturday, August 15. The current year Texas hunting and fishing licenses (except year-to-date fishing licenses) will expire Aug. 31.

Every year, the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department issues about 2.5 million hunting and fishing licenses through the agency's 28 field offices, more than 50 state parks and at over 1,700 retailers across the state. Licenses may also be purchased online through the TPWD website at www.tpwd.texas.gov/buy or by phone at 1-800-895-4248. Call center hours are Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Please note that there is a required \$5 administrative fee for each phone or online transaction but multiple items can be purchased during a single transaction occasion for the \$5 fee. The online transaction system is available 24/7. For online and phone orders, a physical license will be mailed within three business days. During that time period, a transaction receipt will be provided via email that will be sufficient proof of hunting license that can be used for dove hunting, though it will not be allowed for the take of fish or wildlife that require a tag.

Hunting and fishing regulations for the new season can be found in the 2015-2016 Outdoor Annual, available in booklet form at license retailers and digitally online at www.outdoorannual.com. Hunters and anglers can also download the free 2015-2016 Outdoor Annual mobile app on their Apple or Android devices.

Mandatory Hunter Education Certification

In addition to a hunting license, anyone born after Sept. 1, 1971, must successfully complete a hunter education training course or purchase a one-time deferral good for one license year in order to hunt legally in Texas. The certification is valid for life and is honored in all other states and provinces. Last year, TPWD certified a record 72,000 hunter education students, yet Texas game wardens still issued more than 3,400 citations and warnings last fall for hunters not meeting hunter education certification requirements.

Getting certified has never been more convenient. Hunters who need hunter education certification have several expanded contemporary options including a streamlined, one-day basic course and an option for anyone 17 years of age or older to take the hunting safety training completely online. A combination online home study and 4 to 5 hour skills field day course is also offered. More information on hunter education certification is available online at

www.tpwd.texas.gov/huntered .

Bird Hunting Requirements

A Migratory Game Bird endorsement and Harvest Information Program (HIP) certification are also required to hunt dove or teal in September. HIP certification involves a brief survey of previous year's migratory bird hunting success and is conducted at the time licenses are purchased. Duck hunters also need to purchase a Federal Duck Stamp. The cost of the duck stamp was increased this year to \$25, plus applicable state and federal fees.

There are other mandatory endorsements to consider at the time of license purchase. An Upland Game Bird Stamp (\$7) is required to hunt all non-migratory game birds, including turkey, quail, pheasant and chachalaca.

Texas Parks & Wildlife Magazine's Hunting Forecast

The *Texas Parks & Wildlife* magazine's free digital hunting issue will be available starting Friday, August 15. This special issue includes the 2015-2016 hunting forecast for deer, dove, ducks and more. Wild game recipes and other tips are also included. It can be downloaded as a free app on iPad or iPhone or viewed as a digital version online starting August 15 at www.tpwmagazine.com/hunt/

Big Time Texas Hunts

Big Time Texas Hunts provide opportunities to win one or more of nine premium guided hunt packages with food and lodging provided, as well as taxidermy in some cases. The crown jewel of the program is the Texas Grand Slam hunt package, which includes four separate hunts for Texas' most prized big game animals — the desert bighorn sheep, white-tailed deer, mule deer and pronghorn. New this year is the Ultimate Mule Deer Hunt, where one winner will be the first to hunt on the recently acquired Yoakum Dunes WMA. There are several quality whitetail hunt packages available, as well as opportunities to pursue alligator, waterfowl, upland game birds, wild hog and exotics. Big Time Texas Hunts entries are available online for just \$9 each at www.tpwd.texas.gov/buyentry, or for \$10 each at license retailers or by phone. There is no limit to the number of entries an individual may purchase and all proceeds benefit conservation, wildlife management and public hunting. Deadline for entry is October 15. The program is made possible with support from Toyota, Texas Trophy Hunters Association and the Texas Bighorn Society. More details on all nine premium hunts can be found online.

Lifetime Licenses

Hunters and anglers can also take care of their licensing requirements for life with the purchase of a \$1,800 Lifetime Super Combo, or they can enter for the chance to win a lifetime license through the department's Lifetime License Drawing. Entries for the drawing cost \$5 each and may be purchased at license retailers, by phone or online at www.tpwd.texas.gov/licensedraw. There is no limit on the number of entries that may be purchased. Winners will be drawn on Dec. 30, 2015 and June 30, 2016. If you enter by Dec. 27, 2015, you will be eligible for both drawings.