

TPWD Law Enforcement Awards Honor 39 Texans

AUSTIN – From a state game warden who rescued an elderly woman in shock sitting dangerously close to her burning house to a federal agent who obtained convictions in a major case involving illegal importation of deer, 39 persons were honored Thursday by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department's Law Enforcement Division.

Ten city, state, and federal officers, 26 TPWD employees, one fire fighter and two civilians from around the state who have performed exceptionally for the greater good of Texas were presented awards by TPWD Executive Director Carter Smith at TPWD Headquarters.

Receiving the Marine Safety Officer of Year award was Chatt Cottle, a Lower Colorado River Authority ranger. Cottle was recognized for his promotion of safe boating practices through the detection and enforcement of intoxication laws on public waters. The LCRA ranger also hosts both formal and informal training sessions for his fellow officers, prosecutors, and the public.

Director's Awards went to: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service special agent Michael Merida for his role in the obtaining convictions on seven individuals for illegal importation of live deer and harmful fish into Texas; Ray Cartwright for his role as a security professional for TPWD for over 20 years and for providing training, planning, logistics and executive protection for many TPWD commissioners, as well as providing security at many TPWD facilities and special events; former TPWD employee Phil Riggs, the owner of Texan Scuba, for assisting with the department dive team's development, training and equipment acquisition; and Sgt. Paul Bonnar, Officer Glen Mayo, Officer Dave Owings, and Officer Mark Thorsen of the Houston Police dive team for providing extensive advanced public safety diver training, consultation and support at no cost to TPWD.

Also receiving director's awards were: TPWD Internal Affairs Captains Chris Davis and Joe Carter, Texas Ranger Randy Aguirre, Mathis Police Sgt. Francisco Sanchez, Investigator Nicole Delagarza, and Investigator Byron Smith for their role in the recovery of a stolen TPWD rifle from a game warden's truck, and the arrest of two individuals; Groesbeck Volunteer Fire Department Capt. Adam Collett for his role in the rescue of a victim from a flooded ditch south of Ben Hur in Limestone County; TPWD Creative Services employee Chris Hunt for her role in the creation of the Law Enforcement Division's publications including the law enforcement awards certificates, the radio handbooks, leap books, and justice of the peace handbooks; and TPWD regulations coordinator Robert Macdonald for his role in the interpretation process of

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Written by Texas Outdoors

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TPWD code, statutes and proclamations relating to the enforcement of fish, wildlife, and water safety laws, as well as for his role in editing the department's Outdoor Annual.

Other receiving director's citations were: Game Warden Will Plumas for creating a map book of the Rio Grande Valley and the Rio Grande that has assisted multiple agencies in reporting incident locations quicker by shedding light to the river and adjacent land formations that are located in that area; Game Wardens Steve Stapleton, Kurt Kelly and Derek Spitzer for their investigation that uncovered an extensive killing spree of white-tailed deer by four individuals that occurred in Wood and Rains counties in northeast Texas; Special Operations Sgt. Chad Ellis and Sgt. Josh Koenig for their assistance, along with several others, in the recovery of a stolen patrol rifle from a game warden's truck; and Capt. Henry Balderamas for his work facilitating the ability of Spanish speaking individuals to report game violations.

Receiving the director's life saving citations were: Game Wardens Lerrin Williams and Shaun Bayless for their role in saving a kayaker, from Cedar Park, without a life jacket whose kayak was sinking; Game Warden David Vannoy for the rescue of two hunters and their dog whose boat had capsized on Lake Grapevine; Garza/Lynn County Game Warden Drew Spencer for apprehending an armed man suspected of suicidal tendencies; Game Warden Gary Self for rescuing an elderly woman from a burning house in Hall County; and Game Wardens David Pellizzari and Kirk Permenter for the rescue of a man on Lake Palestine.

Also receiving the director's life saving citations were: Game Wardens Brent Satsky, Michael McCall, Kathleen Stuman and Brian Scott for the rescue of a female swimmer having a seizure in Canyon Lake; Game Wardens Sergio Bazaldua and David Bosecker for the rescue of a man on Joe Pool Lake; Game Warden Randy Harper for his assistance, along with Captain Adam Collett, in the rescue of a man trapped in his truck in a flooding ditch in south of Ben Hur in Limestone County; and Lt. Robert French for performing CPR and employing a portable AED to stabilize a cadet who began to convulse and lost consciousness.