

## Game Warden Field Notes

The following items are compiled from recent Texas Parks and Wildlife Department law enforcement reports.

**Nothing like a cheery campfire in a heat wave:** Val Verde County Game Wardens Mike Durand and Dustin Barrett and Val Verde County sheriff's deputies responded on Aug. 19 to a report of trespassers on the Nature Conservancy property on the Devils River. They found five kayakers enjoying a campfire despite a drought-related county burn ban and cited them. Trespass cases also were filed.

**Not just backpackers out for a hike:** Game Wardens assisted Border Patrol agents in apprehending a group of drug smugglers south of Marfa on Aug. 24. Seven men were arrested and each had a backpack of drugs, which were seized. Charges pending.

**Suspected road hunter just a lady needing help:** Near dark on Aug. 22, Grayson County Game Warden Dale Moses was returning home from working on a background investigation when he saw a vehicle's brake lights come on. The vehicle then pulled over to the shoulder about 150 yards down from his gate. Thinking the driver might be looking at deer, Moses went to investigate. As he approached the vehicle, a woman emerged with a stunned look on her face. At this point Moses noticed that the entire window of the vehicle had been shattered. The woman said she had hit something but didn't know what. Moses solved the mystery when he located a dead doe about 50 yards behind the vehicle. Luckily, the woman suffered only minor cuts. Moses waited with the woman until family members and a tow truck arrived.

**Man and dog drown:** Dallas County Game Warden Tom Carbone was notified on Aug. 22 of a drowning on Lake Ray Hubbard. Two men and a dog had been on a boat near Wind Surfer Beach when all three reportedly went swimming, but only one man made it back to the boat. The next day, Carbone, Dallas County Game Warden Sergio Bazaldua and Lt. Jennifer Kemp searched the area with the aid of Dennis Watters, a pro tournament angler who specializes in underwater recoveries. Watters was conducting a search on Lake Ray Hubbard for the Dallas Police Department on another case and contacted Lt. Kemp to assist with the victim recovery on Tuesday. When the search began that morning, the dog was found near the shoreline in some cattails. Watters located the victim within three hours, and the recovery was made by a Dallas Fire Department diver.

**“Telephoners” reach wrong number:** While attending a district meeting on Aug. 19, Jasper County Game Warden Morgan Inman received a call from a local fisherman who said he had witnessed two boats “telephoning” on the Neches River. Inman responded along with Shelby County Game Warden Randy Button and Newton County Game Warden Brian Srba. After two hours of waiting, the wardens finally saw the boats coming in and made contact. After a few questions, the fishermen produced an electric shocker they had been using to stun and illegally take fish. They also told the wardens where it had come from. The next day, wardens Inman and Eddins interviewed the seller and were able to obtain two more devices.

**Very expensive sea food:** Brazoria County Game Wardens Joe Goff, Jason Richers, Scott Jennings and Jim Bob Van Dyke, along with Fort Bend County warden Mike Weiss were doing boat training in the Intracoastal Canal near Freeport on Aug. 20 when Goff received a call that had come through the Operation Game Thief hotline, in which the complainant reported seeing three males on an offshore fishing vessel catching and retaining over their limit and undersize red snapper. The wardens patrolled the Freeport jetties the remainder of the day, and at approximately 6:30 p.m. a vessel towing what turned out to be the reported violator vessel came through the jetties. The wardens made contact with the vessel and discovered that the three occupants possessed 49 red snapper, all of which were undersize, and a pair of undersize cobia. In addition, the vessel was unregistered. A total of 17 cases were filed, as well as civil restitution.

**More very expensive sea food:** On Aug. 20, Matagorda County Game Warden Aaron Koenig and Wharton County Game Warden Chris Bird encountered a Louisiana crew boat coming into the Port O’Conner jetties. Because of the large number of people on the back deck, the wardens decided to see if anyone had been fishing while offshore. After boarding the vessel, the wardens noticed five ice chests packed on the back deck with all of the crew’s other belongings. Upon inspection the coolers were found to contain numerous bags of filleted fish. Five individuals were cited for head and tailed finfish.

**Once a Game Warden, always a Game Warden:** Uvalde County Game Wardens Rachel Kellner and Javier Fuentes got word from retired Game Warden Capt. Bill Hellums that he had heard suspicious shotgun blasts west of Uvalde. After a lot of stopping and listening, the wardens finally found two individuals shooting skeet. The wardens let them know that they had heard the shots and wanted to make sure no one was hunting doves. After searching the bed of the pickup, the wardens discovered mourning doves and four other nongame birds. Hunting in closed season and minor in possession citations were issued. Warden Kellner let Captain Hellums know the good news and he was grinning from ear to ear.

**Wardens assist in search for missing boater:** Medina County Game Warden Jeff Benson responded on Aug. 25 to a call from the sheriff's office regarding an overdue boater on Medina Lake. The subject's vehicle and personal water craft were located at a local marina that evening by family members, but an aerial search that night failed to turn up the missing boater. The following morning, Benson and Game Warden Jorge Tamayo searched the area by boat. A day later, the body of the missing man was discovered near a private boat dock by the property owner. The body was recovered by the sheriff's office.

**Dad joins kids on illegal hunt:** Zapata County Game Wardens Stevan Ramos and Carson Wardlow were patrolling in San Ygnacio on Aug. 18 when they saw a pickup truck stop a couple of blocks in front of them. Warden Wardlow stopped his truck when he saw what appeared to be a gun barrel sticking out of the passenger-side window. As the wardens watched, the passenger shot twice, and the driver got out to retrieve a white-winged dove from the bushes just off the road. The wardens quickly made contact and found that the passenger and driver were both juveniles. Their father was also in the vehicle. One citation was issued for hunting in a closed season and a warning issued for using illegal means and methods. Civil restitution was filed for one white-winged dove.

**Wardens recover boat crash victim's body:** Game wardens were notified on Aug. 18 of a single boat accident in which the operator had been ejected and was missing on Lake LBJ. Burnet County warden Brent Whitus, Lampasas County warden Jim Lindeman, and Llano County warden Kevin Webb responded to the scene and initiated an investigation and recovery operations. The following morning, Burnet County warden Ronnie Langford and Llano County warden Rick Snitkin along with personnel from various local agencies recovered the body. Investigation ongoing.

**Caught red-handed...literally:** Williamson County Game Warden Joel Campos received an Operation Game Thief call regarding hunting dove in closed season. Warden Campos arrived at the reported location in Hutto and noticed two couples outside in the backyard. After making contact with them, he saw a 12-gauge and plenty of spent 12-gauge ammunition as well as a skeet machine. But next to the skeet machine lay the leftovers of several doves that had been cleaned. One male kept his hands behind his back while being interviewed. Campos asked him to put his hands by his side and noticed blood on his finger tips. Caught red-handed, he said he had killed nine mourning dove. The subject also said he was getting ready to put steaks and the dove on the grill before Campos arrived. The birds were confiscated, and the subject was issued citations for hunting dove in closed season, hunting with illegal means and methods. Civil restitution will be pursued.

## Game Warden Field Notes - August 31, 2011

Written by Texas Outdoors

Thursday, 01 September 2011 17:59

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**See ya later, alligator:** Game Warden Kevin Mitchell was called to the scene of a house fire in Sinton after firefighters discovered a two-foot alligator being kept in a plastic tote. Mitchell explained to the home/alligator owner that they could not keep a wild animal as a pet. After a lengthy discussion, a citation was issued and the 'gator returned to the wild.