

Game Warden Field Notes

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

- **Night hunter also had drugs:** Young County Game Warden Brent Isom apprehended two subjects on Sept. 9 for hunting deer at night after seeing them shoot twice at deer from a public roadway. While exiting the vehicle, one of the subjects attempted to hide drugs before being taken into custody. Charges pending.
- **To kill a mockingbird:** Tarrant County Game Warden John Padgett made contact with a dove hunter and his children on Sept. 11. When asked if they had shot any birds, the hunter replied no. But one of the hunter's sons asked, "What about that bird you shot and let us play with, that we threw in the bushes?" The hunter asked his son to go and get the bird, which turned out to be a mockingbird. Cases pending.
- **It helps to be able to see when you shoot:** Tarrant County Game Warden John Padgett made contact with a dove hunter on Sept. 10 and asked if he had any luck. The hunter said he had shot one dove and one pigeon, and was looking for another bird. In his vest he had two pigeons and no dove. When asked about his dove, he said he didn't have his glasses and thought one bird was a dove. After locating his third bird still alive in the field, Warden Padgett told him he had shot an upland sandpiper. The hunter said he had thought that bird was a pigeon. He again mentioned that his glasses were at home. Cases pending.
- **Lead is dead when it comes to waterfowl:** Trinity County Game Warden Sam Shanafelt and Polk County Game Warden Brandon Mosley on Sept. 10 filed numerous cases on subjects hunting teal on Lake Livingston. Several hunters were found to be in possession of lead shot and two hunters were hunting with unplugged shotguns. Cases are pending. Game Wardens Chris Bird and Aaron Koenig were patrolling for teal hunters near East Bernard. Upon contacting a group finishing up a morning hunt, the wardens discovered several shotgun shells containing lead shot in their possession. The wardens also located a large number of empty hulls matching the lead shells floating around the duck blind. Six green-winged teal were seized, and all remaining lead shot shells were confiscated. Cases pending.
- **Craig's List ad leads to arrest:** On Sept. 15 Fort Bend County Game Warden Barry Eversole, with assistance from Galveston County Game Warden Bobby Kana, made contact with an individual who had placed an ad offering waterfowl mounts for sale on Craig's List. Working in plain clothes, Warden Eversole met the individual and bargained a deal to purchase a pair of mounted widgeon. Case pending.
- **Long distance bust:** TPWD's La Porte communications office received a call Sept. 13 from an individual in California. The caller said he had been on a Chinese website when he found a fisherman bragging about all the fish he had been catching. The fisherman even posted several pictures. The photos and website information were forwarded to Captain Tanuz, who in turn contacted the complainant in California. The photos showed an individual with four ice chests of fish, most of which appeared undersize. The photos also showed a fisherman

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standing in an area that appeared to be the east end of Galveston. This information was forwarded to Galveston County Game Wardens Ray Canales and Antone Jackson, and on the evening of Sept. 15, they caught the violator on the east end of Galveston Island in the process of setting an illegal gill net. Cases pending.

- **Not all bags hold birds:** Dimmit County Warden Gene Fernandez and Maverick County Warden David Thorne were coming out of a Dimmit County ranch gate on Sept. 11 when they saw a pickup truck traveling down the road loaded with several burlap sacks that were spray-painted black. The wardens decided that they needed to take a closer look, knowing that this is a common smuggling tactic. After attempting to make a traffic stop, the vehicle fled at a high rate of speed. A pursuit ultimately led to the pickup going through a few ranch fences and the occupants bailing out. With the help of air, ground and K-9 units, 12 individuals were apprehended. Evidence at the scene indicated narcotics smuggling activity by the group. The fleeing vehicle turned out to have been stolen and was turned over to the La Salle County Sheriff's Office.

- **Busted by a cell phone:** Travis County Game Wardens Christy Vales and Braxton Harris were checking dove hunters on Sept. 2 in a field adjacent to a residence and noticed two hunters. After checking the first hunter, they were unable to locate the second hunter they saw earlier. Shortly after driving the outer parts of the field, they found the second hunter crouched down in the tree line. When asked to produce his hunting license, he said his wife had just bought it that day and it's up at the house. The wardens loaded the hunter and his birds up in the truck and took a ride to the house. The wife of the hunter stepped out with an online purchase receipt for his hunting license. The wardens noticed the time of purchase on the receipt and asked to see the hunter's cell phone. Based on the time the hunter called his wife and the time on the receipt, the wardens could tell that the hunter had his wife buy his license just as the wardens pulled into the field. The hunter admitted to hunting without his license hours before the wardens arrived. Citations were issued and seven doves were seized.

- **Hexed by texts:** Travis County Game Wardens Christy Vales and Braxton Harris checked two afternoon dove hunters on Sept. 3, finding one hunter had 15 birds and the other hunter had 12 birds. They also had a pile of 10 birds that they claimed belonged to a friend who left the field earlier. Both claimed they hadn't hunted that morning. But while being questioned about 10 birds left behind by their buddy, they mentioned that they had been texting him to see if he was going to hunt that afternoon. The wardens asked to view the text messages to back up their story. After viewing the messages, the wardens saw several texts supporting their story, but also saw several messages bragging about how many birds they got that morning. The wardens checked out their story with the friend on the phone and explained that they needed a Wildlife Resource Document (WRD) for the 10 birds. The hunters finally admitted to hunting that morning. Cases pending.

- **Case of the disappearing shotgun:** Travis County Game Warden Christy Vales was approaching a dove field on Sept. 5 when she saw several hunters together and one hunter walking across the field with a shotgun. Once Warden Vales entered the field, that same hunter was still walking in the field, but without his shotgun. She made contact with him and asked if he had been hunting. He said he had just been going to the bathroom and hanging out with his friends. Warden Vales continued checking all the hunters, issuing citations for unplugged shotgun and no hunter education. Warden Vales eventually came back to the male subject. She explained to him that she was going to drive the dove field until she found his shotgun.

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When asked again if he had been hunting, he said yes and that he just got scared because he didn't have a hunting license. Warden Vales located the shotgun and issued several citations.

- **Different kind of bachelor party:** On Sept. 10 Erath County Game Warden Zach Havens saw a group of vehicles parked in a coastal field and heard a variety of reports that sounded like pistols, large caliber rifles, and shotguns. Warden Havens stayed concealed in the brush and watched the group for a while. Soon he started seeing birds drop from the air as they flew near the vehicles. Closer inspection revealed a bachelor party in progress. Killed were several beers and even more scissor tails. Cases pending.

- **Never know when you'll see a game warden:** Travis County Game Wardens Chad West and Braxton Harris were checking an area of the county less known for dove hunting. The two wardens followed the sound of shotguns and found a resident who seemed surprised to see them. When the wardens asked to see his license, the hunter said he thought if you owned your own land you didn't need a license. The wardens informed the hunter of the law and he finally said the reason he didn't buy a license was because he hadn't seen a game warden in 10 years. Cases pending.

- **Snakes or ticket?** On opening weekend of dove season, Bell County Game Warden Justin Valchar was checking hunters when he noticed there was one less individual than he had originally seen. The warden noticed that one hunter kept looking at a nearby barn. Valchar checked the barn and found a vest with 14 dove and shotgun shells sitting in a feed trough. He then noticed someone's knee poking up through the floor boards. The individual was ordered out. When asked why he was hiding under a snake-infested barn, he replied that he did not have a hunting license. Cases filed.

- **Undersize snapper haul leads to empty ice chest:** While patrolling the Aransas Channel Sept. 8, San Patricio Game Warden Albert Flores inspected a vessel and found 50 undersize red snapper. Citations were issued and the fisherman sent home with an empty cooler.