

SPRING 2010



ACE Magazine

OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF THE ALABAMA CONSERVATION ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS ASSOCIATION



**CHRIS JACKSON
WITH HIS TROPHY BUCK
AT THE BADF LIFEHUNT CLASSIC**

**Alabama Conservation
Enforcement Officers Association**

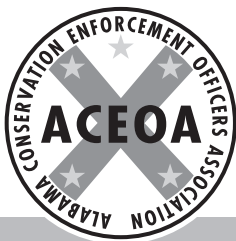
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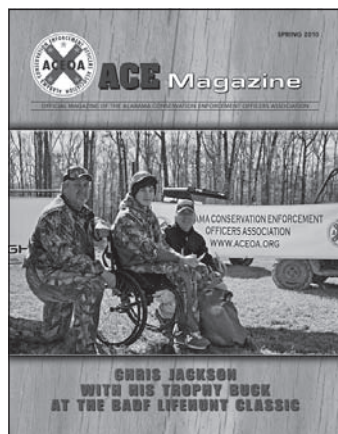
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ON THE COVER

Chris Jackson with
Jackie Bushman and
his father Ken Jackson.



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Notes From The Trenches

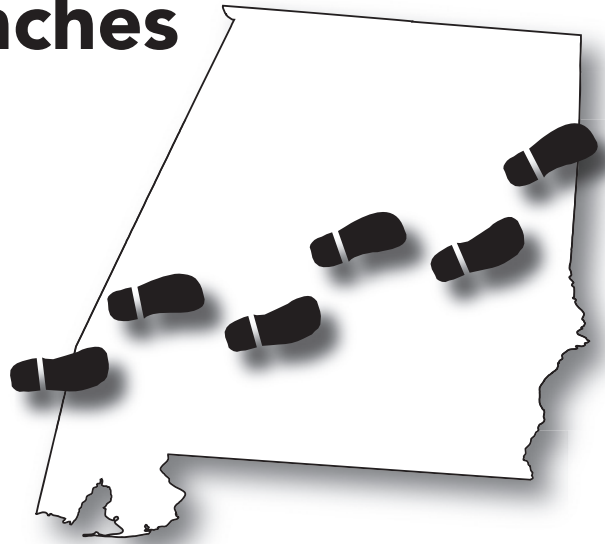
by Rusty Morrow, ACEOA Executive Director

By the time our Spring issue reaches your mailbox, turkey season should be well on its way. This, by far, is my favorite time of the year and definitely my favorite season. I truly love those eastern wild turkeys... hello SPRING!

We have had great reviews from our Fall/Winter issue of *ACE Magazine*. We want to give special thanks to David Rainer from the Alabama Conservation Department. He really provides some interesting articles that are straight from the sources. I hope you enjoyed all of the articles. Probably the favorite was written by Officer Jerry Fincher on "Noodling." Yeah, I know, the boy ain't right! He does have a special way of telling a story that keeps everyone entertained. Remember our magazines can also be viewed online at www.aceoa.org.

My articles on Practical Jokes and the McCurdys of Lowndesboro really stirred up a hornet's nest! The McCurdys are even considering a rematch. I have been threatened with war! I did mention to them that I have plenty of time for retaliation since I am partially retired. We'll see if that changes their mind.

Our summer events are lined up and the officers are looking forward to working with the kids again. Every district has a full calendar. I hope you will read and enjoy my article on my Illinois hunt in December. I was able to visit my dear friends, Ron and Jill Doering at the Hunt Club in Percy Illinois. What a great trip! It was very difficult to express in writing the depth of excitement I felt while see-



ing some of those huge Illinois bucks. It is, without a doubt, the "land of giants."

We feel our magazine grows with each issue. We would love to hear more from our corporate sponsors on what you would like to see and read about in future issues of *ACE Magazine*. Please email me on our website at www.aceoa.org.

Our editors would like to start a "Kid's Corner" in this and future magazines. We would like to encourage our youth to visit the outdoors and share the excitement with our readers. We would like to feature exciting hunts or fishing trips. This would be a great place to post the first deer or turkey. Send entries to rusty_morrow@yahoo.com. In the subject line, write Kid's Corner.

In this issue of *ACE Magazine* is a story dear to my heart. It features a young man named Chris Jackson. He is featured on our front cover with Jackie Bushman. I've watched Chris grow up. I was with him when he went on some of his very first hunts at about eight years old. It was great seeing him return to the outdoors and bag such a nice deer at the Life Hunt. He is such an inspiration to so many people.

I will close in my favorite way and leave you with a quote:

*Courage is the ladder on which
all the other virtues mount.*
— Clare Boothe Luce

Enjoy *ACE Magazine* and when finished – pass it on to a friend.



Kenneth and Chris Jackson, Rusty Morrow, and Mark Gray.



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Executive Director

Rusty Morrow

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My Life Hunt Experience

by Chris Jackson, photos by Gayle Morrow

Incredible...is how I would describe the 2010 Buckmaster's Life Hunt. When I learned I had been invited to the Buckmaster's Life Hunt, I was so excited. To be sponsored by the ACEOA this year was a great honor for me. It was the first time since my accident, to get back out in the woods and participate in something I care so much about.

When my dad and I arrived on the first day, scent-lok had provided clothes and supplies for hunting. Other sponsors provided hats, t-shirts, flashlights and all kinds of neat stuff.

We went out on two hunts each day, one in the morning and back in for lunch, and one in the afternoon and then we would come in for dinner. I have to say, that was one of my favorite things...the food. Each time we came in from a hunt, we had great food waiting on us.

I enjoyed sitting around the fire in between hunts and talking to the guides and other hunters. Everyone there was more than helpful. My guide, Clayton was so great. He would take me out on each of the hunts and help me get set up.

The first two days were very frustrating for me, seeing big bucks that were just out of range, too far off to take a shot. But then, on the last day of the hunt, my luck changed, I bagged a nice 8-point buck. It would have been a 9-point but one of its brow tines was broke. As I mentioned before, Clayton was great. He had to track my deer for a long ways before he found it. Even if I hadn't taken a deer, I would



Chris Jackson & Jackie Bushman.

have had a great time. Just to be able to get out in the woods with my gun, knowing I can still do it, was all I needed.

When I was in rehab in Atlanta, a man with the same level of injury as me, who was a volunteer at the Shepherd Center, said something to me that I will never forget. He said "before your accident, you could do ten thousand different things, now you can only do four thousand of those things. You can choose to dwell on the six thousand you can't do anymore or you can get out and get going on the four thousand things you can still do. I choose to get out and work on the things I can still do. It may take me longer and be a little more difficult than before, but I've learned to do things in a different way. I'm just very thankful I'm still here to do them.

The Life Hunt is such a great opportunity for people with disabilities to get back to the things they always loved to do before; but it is also great to expose others with disabilities that have never been hunting and would probably never get to go if it weren't for the Buckmaster's.

I would like to thank Jackie Bushman of Buckmaster's, David Sullivan, my guide Clayton, the ACEOA and last but not least, the Hinton family. I would also like to give a very special thanks to my good friends Rusty and Gayle Morrow. You guys are the best.



Chris and Ken Jackson join in fun with others.

more photos continued on 12



MY LIFE HUNT EXPERIENCE – *continued*



Chris Jackson, Jackie Bushman, and David Sullivan.



Having great time at the BADF Life Hunt.



Chris Jackson, Gayle and Rusty Morrow.



Chris Jaworoski and Chris Jackson.



Rusty gives Chris a "high-five."



2010 BADF Life Hunters.

BADF Life Hunt

by David Rainer, Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources

When Rusty Morrow and the Alabama Conservation Enforcement Officers Association (ACEOA) started nominating a disabled hunter for the annual Buckmasters Lifehunt Classic four years ago, he never imagined that participation would have a personal impact for the second time.

Then on July 5, 2008, it became tragically close to Morrow when the son of one of his best friends went to sleep on his way to work early that Saturday morning and the resulting wreck left Chris Jackson with a fractured C-6 vertebra and fighting for his life. After 68 days in intensive care at UAB Hospital, Chris was transferred to the Shepherd Spinal Center in Atlanta.

"For the last four years we've sponsored a hunter each year from Alabama," said Morrow, a retired Alabama Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries Conservation Enforcement Officer. "This year it happened to a very good friend of mine's son.

Ken, Chris' Daddy, and I went to high school together at Banks High School in Birmingham. Chris was injured in an automobile accident in 2008. He was an avid hunter the whole time he was growing up, hunting with me and his daddy.

"We felt like this would be a great opportunity for him to come over and be part of the BADF (Buckmasters American Deer Foundation) hunt. Coincidentally this year, he happened to be a friend. We actively search for someone who meets the BADF qualifications to hunt. Sometimes David Sullivan (BADF Director of Disabled Services) selects them and sometimes, like Chris, we know them personally. We also sponsored Audra Mickle, the daughter of my former partner (Keith Mickle) who is now a State Trooper. She had cancer and hunted the first year we were a sponsor. So we've had personal contact with two of the four people we have sponsored at the life hunt. With Chris it's also real personal."

Chris said he doesn't remember anything about the accident but during his recovery he was determined to return to his beloved outdoors.

"Every chance I was at the hunting club at Lowndesboro," said Chris of his activities before the accident. "Hunting and fishing were my favorite things to do. I liked deer hunting and any kind of fishing.

"When I got home from the Shepherd Center, I started working out and getting stronger. I got to where I could get into the wheelchair by myself and I'm pretty much doing anything I want to. I just have to have a little help getting into the boat and into the deer stand."

Ken said Chris' quadriplegia affects him from mid-chest down.

"He has very little use of his fingers," Ken said. "But they've made all sorts of adaptive equipment including spoons and forks and he eats like everybody else. The thing we're doing now is building a single-story house on a slab. We just signed the contract. It'll be handicapped accessible. Now we have a two-story house. We built a ramp, but he only has access to the first floor. The new house will be a big house and he'll have the room to do whatever he needs to do. U.S. Pipe built him a gun rack that is really nice."

The Buckmasters hunt turned out to be Chris' triumphant return to deer hunting in more ways than one. For the first two days of the hunt he had to deal with the frustration of the numerous shooter bucks that were just out of range.

"It's neat," he said of the Lifehunt Classic event after the second day. "It's a good thing. I've had a great time even if I don't get a deer."

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Chris Jackson shows off the trophy buck he took on the last day of the Buckmasters Lifehunt Classic at Sedgfield Plantation in Dallas County with Rusty Morrow, right, and Trey Pose of the Alabama Conservation Enforcement Officers Association.



BADF LIFE HUNT – *continued*

However, his deer-hunting fortunes reversed on the final morning of the hunt and he bagged a beautiful eight-pointer. The deer would have been a nine-point but one of its brow tines had been broken off.

"You can't imagine how excited he was," Ken said.

"Tuesday afternoon we sat in stand and all the deer came out about 500 yards away," Chris said. "They put up a ground blind on field where we saw the deer for the next morning. I guess we sat there about an hour when this deer came out. It felt great to get the deer and to find out that I could get back out there. The conservation officers are getting it mounted for me and it's going on the wall in the new house."

Chris' positive attitude so endeared him to the Shepherd staff that they recruited his help.

"The people at the Shepherd Center would get Chris to talk to other people dealing with spinal cord injuries," Ken said. "Chris has done excellent. We're going to live with it."

"I'm alive," Chris said. "That's all that matters."

Sullivan said the 2010 hunt hosted 11 disabled and critically ill hunters at Sedgefield, a prime Dallas County property owned by the Hinton family.

"Over the years, we've dealt with people with all levels of quadriplegia," Sullivan said. "The vertebra that is injured determines the effect of the disability. Usually, if it's the first few vertebrae, people will have very little use of their arms. When you get down to C-4, C-5 and C-6, the individual may be able to use their arms some, push a wheelchair some and might have some finger movement. Typically, it always affects the fingers and hands."

Sullivan said he has been particularly impressed with Jackson's attitude in dealing with his disability.

"It's pretty amazing considering the short time he's been injured," Sullivan said. "People go through a lot of different phases. If Chris hasn't gone through depression and has adjusted well, he's one of the rare few. He's been very blessed."

"The last I heard, about 11,000 people in the U.S. a year are rendered quadriplegic due to accidents. Diving into shallow pools or creeks and car accidents are the most common causes. And we do see some treestand accidents."

Montgomery's Jackie Bushman, Buckmasters founder and CEO, said he hates to sound like a broken record but the Lifehunt Classic is his favorite event.

"I say this every year – if we could only do one show, this would be it," Bushman said. "It means more to me personally because of all the kids, parents, the Hinton and the guides who work so hard to make this happen. To see the smiles on these kids' and adults' faces, it makes it all worth it. It's an honor for us to do this."

For those physically handicapped who would like to continue their outdoors activities, the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources offers Alabama's Hunting and Fishing Trail for People with Physical Disabilities. There are 17 hunting sites scattered around the state, 11 shooting sites and 20 fishing sites, as well as three archery sites.

Visit www.outdooralabama.com to discover the possibilities.



Hats Off to the Hintons

by Rusty Morrow

ACEOA had the honor of presenting Mr. Jimmy Hinton Sr. and Mr. Jimmy Hinton Jr. a distinguished service award for 20 years of service to the Buckmasters American Deer Foundation (BADF) and special needs hunters.

This award is a small token for the dedication the Hinton family has shown over the last 20 years. Every January, the Hintons offer their beautiful plantation in Dallas County for the hunt of a lifetime provided to severely physically challenged and terminally ill hunters.

Weeks prior to the "Life Hunt Classic," a multitude of volunteers descend upon Sedgefield Plantation and prepare the hunting areas with one goal in focus – 100% success for every hunter.

Our corporate sponsors have made it possible for ACEOA to sponsor four hunters during the Life Hunt Classic (Audra Mickle 2007, Brian McSorley 2008, Skylar Blair 2009, and Chris Jackson 2010). Every hunt has proven to be the hunt of a lifetime providing an unbelievable experience for hunter and ACEOA.



ACEOA appreciates the dedication of the Hinton family and all of the hard work of the volunteers and guides. It has been my great pleasure to see, first hand, what this hunt means to all of the hunters.

ACEOA is dedicated to BADF, Sedgefield Plantation, and the Hinton family. We will begin special projects in the summer of 2010 to aid in this effort.

Follow Up on Kokomo Road

by Lt. Mike McNeil

During mid-January of 2010 I received complaints from Kokomo Road residents of night hunting on property owned by Dr. George Tisdale. Kokomo Road ends at the Tisdale Property Gate and the property lies to both the east and west of the roadway. I was not surprised of the complaint since this is the same street where Dusty Casselman (see previous article) lives. It is also the same street where I had watched one of his neighbors night hunt during the previous year. I notified my partner, CEO Don Reaves, of the complaint and we set up a plan to begin working the area.

We contacted Mark Lewis, Property Manager for Dr. Tisdale, to gain access to a large pasture on the west of the street. Bordering the backs of the houses along the road, anyone trying to hunt the property would certainly scan this field with its expansive border of large oak trees. The field is fairly flat but on the north edge there is a ridge, which is tall enough to allow us to hide a truck day or night. We worked the complaint on both Saturday and Sunday nights during the final two weekends of the deer season with no activity. I tried to gain more information about the possible hunter by using my personal truck and my wife's car to ride the length of the street several times during those weeks.

On Saturday, February 6, 2010 at approximately 6:40 p.m. I parked my truck behind the ridge on the north side of the pasture. My partner was planning to work the complaint with me later but I just had a feeling. As I walked to the top edge of the ridge my feeling paid off...a bright spotlight hit me in the face. The hunter was almost a quarter of a mile away and never noticed me as I skirted



68°F 12/28/08 12:49 PM WBTISDALE

the back edge of the pasture and got into the trees. He was in the backyard of a mobile home at the south end of Kokomo Road, the same yard where we had watched a hunter the year before but never got to arrest him.

It took about an hour and 20 minutes to work my way within 40 yards of the hunter. During that time he had shined the field and nearby woods multiple times, and I could plainly see a long gun with a scope in his right hand. Due to two barbwire fences between us I could not get to him. When the hunter went inside the mobile home I used the opportunity to get into his front yard and hide on the south end of the trailer in a dark shadow.

Over the next 30 minutes the hunter shined the field and wooded areas to the front of the house two different times but instead of coming out he was shining through the windows. There was a window on the end where I was concealed but I didn't figure he would use it since it was covered over with aluminum foil. I stood there in the dark feeling safe and plotting on how I would take him down whenever he stepped out again; the two faint clicks of the window latches brought me quickly to reality and a defensive posture.

As the window slowly raised so did my flashlight and when he realized I was there I yelled, "State Game Warden, you're under arrest!" His reply was a slight scream and then the window fell. I ran to the front door and continued yelling at the suspect, trying to make as much commotion as possible for my own protection as well as to notify any occupants of this and the other homes. I put the flashlight in my pocket and tried the doorknob...it opened just as the suspect came running up the hall. I cuffed him and explained how I had been watching him for almost two hours. After calling for backup and transport through Georgiana P.D., I asked the suspect, Martin Wayne Bender, where he had put the light and gun. He showed me a gun and a large Maglight in the bedroom on the south end of the mobile home. The gun was still loaded.

Bender was charged with hunting in closed season and hunting at night. He is still awaiting a court date in late March.



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ACEOA Supports Youth Dove Hunt

by Jeff L. Makemson, District III Director

The light rain and muddy fields did not dampen the spirits of the children and adults assisting with a special dove hunt for the youth. Tuscaloosa Young Farmers Federation, ACEOA, and the Alabama Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries Division partnered to host the second annual youth dove hunt in the rich river bottom farmland of South Tuscaloosa County. What made this dove hunt so special were the children that ACEOA sponsored to attend. More than twenty children from the Big Oak Boys and Girls Ranch and ten children from the Tuscaloosa area attended.

The Tuscaloosa Young Farmers Federation secured the dove field, provided the food and drinks, provided personnel to hunt and mentor with the children, took them on a hayride, entertained with a lab retriever demonstration, and assisted with the Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries Shooting Sports Trailer. After eating a great meal, and a safety discussion, the children were divided into groups and allowed to rotate to each station. This gave the children a source of entertainment, while waiting for the afternoon when it is the mourning dove's prime flight and feeding time. At 3:00 p.m. the children and a mentoring adult were taken to the field on the trailer with hay and dropped off at their hunting stations.

The next few hours were filled with one on one mentoring of dove hunting, lessons of life, and lots of shooting. While it only lasted a few hours, several dozen birds were harvested, cases of shells were shot and the memories made will last a lifetime.

In our line of work many things we do are full of great rewards, but none is as rewarding as working with under privileged children. They really appreciate what you do for them and, if it were not for caring adults, they probably would not have the opportunity to experience these things in their lifetime.

I am reminded of a young girl who came to the dove hunt from Tuscaloosa County and was walking with one of the children from the Big Oak Ranch. She was discussing her dissatisfaction with the clothes her parents had bought her to wear while attending the dove hunt. The young boy from the Big Oak Ranch looked up at her

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Hunters loaded on the trailer going to the field to hunt doves.



Hunters gathering waiting on the trailer to take them to the dove field.



Scott Gregory (Tuscaloosa Young Farmers Federation Member) serving and getting the food ready for the dove hunt participants.



ACEOA SUPPORTS YOUTH DOVE HUNT – *continued*

and said, "you should be proud you have a parent to buy clothes for you." This caused a small tear to appear in the young girl's eyes and slowly run down her innocent face. The mentoring, genuine care, and love given to these children this afternoon was very heart warming and much more than just a social dove hunt.

*Youth Dove Hunt Participants
with ACEOA banner.*



*Cullin Wiggins (Tuscaloosa Young Farmers Federation Member) assisting with the shooting sports event
as others wait for a chance to shoot.*

Preparing For Warm Weather Boating

by Lt. Erika Shipman, Alabama Marine Police

With the temperatures and water warming up, boaters begin to think about getting out on the water for pleasure boating, warm weather fishing, and other water activities. But how many of these boaters are prepared for the warm weather boating season? How many of these boaters have performed the necessary maintenance on their boat, trailer, and other safety equipment? How many know if there have been changes in the boating laws? There are many facets to bringing in a new boating season other than just launching the boat.

Most of our Conservation Enforcement Officers throughout the state will confirm that the start of the warm weather boating season usually brings a lot of broken down boats with it. It is not unusual for these officers to tow in five or more boats per day. However, many of these problems could be avoided with a few preventative maintenance tips.

If you own a boat, most manufacturers strongly recommend that you take it to a professional for winterizing. These professionals have been trained to repair and maintain boats, motors, and trailers. They will know what needs to be done and they have the tools and supplies needed to do the job properly. If you are a do-it-yourselfer, there are certain things that should be done before the boat is put up for the winter, and other things that need to be done prior to putting the boat in the water. Consult your owner's manual. Many times there are maintenance tips included that may help you with this task. Listed below are some maintenance tips provided by Marine Mechanics Jeff Dickinson, and Randy Roten of the Marine Police.

(NOTE: These tips are not intended to take the place of professional service work, only to help guide the boater.)



Boat and Motor Maintenance:

- ❖ Prior to putting up for the winter:
 - Remove drain plug from bilge of boat
 - Remove propeller to check for debris or monofilament line. Lubricate propeller shaft before re-installing propeller
 - Oil all compartment locks
 - All motors being winterized need fuel stabilizer in the gas tank.
 - Change engine oil and filter
 - Check stern drive (inboard-outboard motor) or outboard gear case oil for correct level and contamination.
 - Change water separating fuel filter
 - On outboard motors, lubricate the swivel bracket, tilt support, tilt tube and the steering cable
 - Unless motor has closed cooling system, all water needs to be drained from the manifold, hoses, petcocks, and block to prevent freezing
 - Check the closed cooling system coolant levels (anti-freeze) if applicable
 - Make sure to store boat with the outdrive in the down position
- ❖ Prior to putting boat in the water
 - Check belts for cracks or excessive wear
 - Check power steering fluid
 - Check power trim pump oil. If milky, it needs to be changed
 - Check audio warning system
 - Inspect spark plugs. Clean or replace if necessary.



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PREPARING FOR WARM WEATHER BOATING – *continued*

- On outboards, check water pump indicator hole to make sure it is free from debris.
- Check screws, nuts and bolts on all mounted equipment
- Before storing boat for the winter and prior to putting boat in the water, check battery water levels, connections, and for corrosion. If possible, remove battery for winter storage, clean top surfaces, grease terminal bolts, place in a box or carton and store in a cool, dry place.
- Lubricate the gimbal bearing and the gimbal ring/bell housing pivot pins before storing for the winter, and again before putting in the water.

Keep in mind, the main considerations when winterizing a boat and motor are 1) removal of water from the boat and motor to avoid physical damage from freezing and, 2) protection through lubrication from rust, corrosion, and dirt.

Safety equipment also needs to be maintained in order to work properly. Taking care of your safety equipment can prolong its life and save you from some unnecessary expenses for replacement. Life jackets will rot or become unserviceable if left to the elements. When storing the boat for the winter, remove all wearable life jackets and type IV throwables and store in a cool, dry place. Inspect them at the start of each boating season, and throw away any that have rips, tears, or are missing any straps or buckles. Also remove fire extinguishers from boat, when winterizing, and store in a cool, dry place. Before launching your boat, check the fire extinguisher gauge or pop up button to make sure the extinguisher is still serviceable. Make sure nozzles are free of debris, hoses are not cracked or broken, and that the locking pins and sealing wires are in place. Check boat horns to make sure they are operational. If you use a portable air horn, check it to make sure it still works. Check the emergency cut-off switch, if applicable, to make sure it is still operational. Verify that navigation lights are working, and place extra light bulbs on the boat.

Many people do remove all safety equipment from the boat when storing it for the winter, but forget to put it back on before their first spring

voyage. Here is a listing of most of the required equipment needed for Alabama boaters:

Required Safety Equipment

- ❖ Wearable life jacket for everyone on board. They must be:
 - US Coast Guard approved
 - Sized to fit
 - In good condition (no rips, tears, or missing parts)
 - Accessible (not stored in a locker or closed compartment)
 - Worn by children under 8 years old (unless in an enclosed cabin or sleeping quarters)
 - Worn by anyone being towed on skis or a tube
 - Worn by anyone on a personal watercraft
 - Worn by anyone within 800 feet below a hydroelectric dam or navigational lock or dam.
- ❖ A Type IV US Coast Guard approved throwable device for boats 16 feet and over.
- ❖ Boats 16 feet to less than 26 feet are required to have a sound-producing device, such as a whistle horn or bell audible for ½ mile. Boats 26 feet to 40 feet are required to have a sound-producing device

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PREPARING FOR WARM WEATHER BOATING – *continued*

audible for 1 mile. Boats over 40 feet are required to have a power operated sound producing device audible for 1 mile.

- ❖ Boats less than 24 feet in length and over 50 HP with an open cockpit must have an emergency shut-off switch, lanyard type. The lanyard must be attached to the operator whenever the boat is underway.
- ❖ Fire extinguishers (US Coast Guard approved) are required for boats with:
 - inboard or inboard/outboard motors
 - enclosed or permanently mounted gas tanks,
 - closed or semi-closed cabins or sleeping quarters
 - any other fuel consuming device such as a lantern or stove
- ❖ Boats with inboard or inboard/outboard motors are required to have a backfire flame arrestor
- ❖ Navigation lights are required for boats operating between sunset and sunrise, and in low visibility.
- ❖ Flares (3 day, 3 night or 3 combination type) if boating on coastal waters.
- ❖ Registration certificate and operator's license

In addition to knowing about maintenance on the boat and safety equipment, warm weather boaters should keep up-to-date on changes in the boating laws that may affect them such as the Alabama Boating Safety Enhancement Act of 2001, which became effective on January 1, 2002. The highlights of the act are as follows:

- ✓ **License Requirements:** License requirements remain the same: Anyone 12 years old or older who operates a motorized vessel in the State of Alabama must have an operator's license. Non-residents have a 45-day grace period, per calendar year, before having to obtain an operator's license.
- ✓ **Legal Age:** The legal age to operate alone has been raised to 14.
 - **Alabama Residents:**
An Alabama resident who is 12 but not yet 14 years old can only operate a vessel after obtaining an operator's license and must have a person 21 years old or older with a valid operator's license on board and in a position to take immediate physical control of the vessel if necessary.



- **Non-Residents:**

A non-resident who is 12 but less than 14 years old may not operate a vessel unless there is a person 21 years old or older with a valid operator's license (unless a non-resident) on board and in a position to take immediate physical control of the vessel if necessary.

Non-residents 14 years old or older may operate alone in the State of Alabama.

- ✓ **Boating Under The Influence:** The BAC level has been dropped to .08 and the fines and punishments have been aligned with the highway DUI laws and penalties.

Warm weather boating and fishing are activities enjoyed by many people in Alabama. However, in this case, an ounce of prevention really is worth a pound of cure. What started out as a pleasurable activity can quickly end in ruins if the boat breaks down or your safety equipment will not work or is missing when you need it. Taking some time now to perform preventative maintenance on your boat and equipment will save you headaches later and allow you to enjoy the beauty of your Alabama waterways.



More Of "The People You Meet"

by Scott Kellenberger, D-2 Director

For better or worse, this is a sequel to an earlier article I wrote for *ACE Magazine* describing some of the interesting people that I have been privileged to meet in the course of my career as a CEO with the Marine Police Division.

This time I am introducing the reader to two old bow hunters, Dale Hunt of Guntersville, and his long time hunting partner Butch Holmes of Holly Pond. Together they are the Chiefs of Broken Arrow Hunting club, an archery only club in Jackson County.

I met these two gents through Johnny Johnson (now Captain Johnson, Dist. 1 WWFLE). Before Johnny was promoted to Captain, he was a CEO in Jackson County for 29 years. He and I worked together often, and hunted occasionally (some might say it was the other way around). I took an interest in primitive archery about this time, and Johnny introduced me to Dale and Butch. This was in 1996 or '97.

At that time the only hunting equipment allowed for deer hunting on Broken Arrow was either traditional archery (recurve or long bows) or primitive (handmade wood bows). Dale has never owned a compound bow. He started hunting with a laminated recurve bows in the early 70's, and started building and using primitive self (all wood) bows about ten years later . Butch followed roughly the same path, except for a brief affair with a compound bow.

Since then they have deer hunted exclusively with primitive equipment that they have made themselves. They have built dozens of bows over the years, most of which are still being used. Their preferred woods are Osage Orange, and Pignut or Mockernut Hickory. Dale prefers a simple "flat" bow made of a single stave of wood. Butch is currently shooting a recurved Osage bow backed (covered) with copperhead skins. They build their arrows using sourwood shoots or switch cane shafting and wild turkey feathers. Their broad heads are also hand made from saw blades. Although



their choice of tackle is called "primitive," it is far from being crude. A solid understanding of archery physics and the properties of wood is required to build a matched bow and arrows. It can also be very effective, as Dale has killed fifty-some deer with traditional and primitive tackle. Butch has taken around forty, but doesn't know the exact number.

Dale and Butch have hunted together for thirty-five years, mostly on Bankhead National forest and Skyline WMA, until the mid 80's, when they leased 1500 acres from Alabama Power, which became Broken Arrow. The club now allows a few of the members to use compound bows, to accommodate injuries and arthritis, but no firearms except for turkey hunting. Butch and Dale are both sixty-nine years old now. Dale survived a heart attack a few years back, and doesn't hunt much anymore. Butch still climbs trees and hunts harder than most guys I know. I have shot with him several times, and I wouldn't want him shooting at me. His twelve year old grandson, Nathan, hunts with him now, using a forty-five pound bear recurve.

The club originally had an old surplus army tent with a wood stove that served as the mess hall and general BS area. Big meals and a campfire are still standard procedure most Friday evenings during deer and turkey seasons. Their camp is a frequent stop for me in December and January, as I often work waterfowl hunting and crappie fishermen on the nearby Crow Creek WMA. Old fashioned hunting camps like Broken Arrow, and old geezers like Butch and Dale are few and far between now. And for me, getting to know people like them is the best part of this job.





Bass Pros Cast Alabama As Top Two Favorite

by David Rainer, Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources

Already the birthplace of competitive bass fishing, Alabama continues to showcase its elite stature in the bass fishing world, not to mention why Kevin VanDam ranks Alabama among his top two favorite places to cast a lure.

For obvious reasons, Alabama is a special place for VanDam, the most dominating angler in professional bass fishing's history. The Kalamazoo, Mich., native just completed a sweep of the two most-coveted titles in the sport.

The first was his come-from-behind victory on the Alabama River in Montgomery in September to claim the Bassmaster Angler of the Year.

Then came his impressive performance during the 40th annual Bassmaster Classic on Lay Lake, where he over-



PHOTO COURTESY OF ESPN OUTDOORS

PHOTO COURTESY OF ESPN OUTDOORS



Kevin VanDam pulls a chunky largemouth bass out of Beeswax Creek on Lay Lake during the recent 2010 Bassmaster Classic, which helped the current Bassmaster Angler of the Year win his third Classic title.

came cold weather and poor water conditions to overwhelm the nation's best competition en route to a five-pound victory when the three-day competition ended on Feb. 21. VanDam finished with 51 pounds, 6 ounces. Prattville's Russ Lane made a late charge but had to settle for a fourth-place finish.

VanDam admitted Alabama has been a special place for him during his professional career.

"It always has been," he said. "I've had a lot of good finishes over the years in Alabama. The lakes are managed very well. Texas and Alabama are probably the two best states in the country in the way they manage their fisheries. You look at Gunter'sville, Pickwick – the whole Tennessee River – it's just a fantastic system. Then the Coosa River, too, from Weiss all the way down to Montgomery, I've always enjoyed fishing.

"I fished my first Classic at Logan Martin in '92, and I really enjoy fishing those spots (Alabama spotted bass). They act like the smallmouths in the rivers at home. They act like largemouths, too, but they like the current and they're mean."

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BASS PROS CAST ALABAMA AS TOP TWO FAVORITE – *continued*

VanDam has been impressed with the number of fish Lay Lake has produced during different times of the year. Even with the poor fishing conditions, he managed to break that 50-pound barrier.

"We were probably a week or two away from this lake showing really how good it is," he said of the Classic. "I came down and fished the Mark's Outdoor tournament last year. There were probably 500 boats on the water that day. That time of year, when it's the tail-end of the spawn and all the fish were shallow, it was just amazing the number of fish that were caught. It's just a fertile fish factory."

"The other thing all of us have seen is the amount of shad here. That's what it takes. You've got to have good habitat. Lay Lake is full of shallow flats, lots of grass, standing timber, so it's got the cover and it's got the forage base. You can go into any creek and it's wall-to-wall shad dying from the cold water. The bass are fat and they're feeding up to get real healthy. Even the sea gulls, they can hardly fly, they're so fat."

The three-time Classic champ will again have the chance to add to his collection of trophies won in Alabama when the Bassmaster Championship Series returns to the Montgomery area this summer. Toyota Trucks Championship Week is set for July 24-31 with the top 12 anglers from the Elite Series competing for the coveted Angler of the Year title. The first leg is the Trophy Chase July 24-25 at Lake Jordan near Wetumpka. The Evan Williams Bourbon Trophy Triumph, where the top angler will be crowned, is set for July 30-31 on the Alabama River from Montgomery.

Jamie Wilkinson, ESPN's Senior Director of Operations and Business Development, said it was not a difficult decision to bring the postseason tournaments back to Alabama.

"You've got good lakes, quality cities that appreciate the sport of bass fishing and the third or fourth largest BASS membership," Wilkinson said. "The thing with all of our events, no matter what level – Open, Classic, Elite Series – cities have to have a unique mix of hotels, venues and willingness and desire to promote professional bass fishing. And Alabama especially appreciates that."

"The Classic, anywhere, not just in Alabama, is a big challenge. Birmingham is the only place in Alabama that has the facilities and the rooms available to support the Classic. I would say right now, Birmingham is in the top one or two places in the country to host this event. Alabama has fantastic fans who follow bass fishing as a sport and

a lifestyle. They have local heroes who compete in the Elite Series. And when you have a Gerald Swindle or Randy Howell come into the arena, there's clearly a different crowd response from the next guy. It also has engaged media who follow these fishermen on a regular basis."

Wilkinson said although the weights during tournaments held in Alabama usually don't match those held in some of the events in California, Texas and Florida, the Alabama lakes are dependable.

"You can count on them any time of the year," he said. "There's going to be decent fishing. We're not going to break any records, but you can count on a quality tournament."

As for coming back to what is now referred to as the River Region (Prattville, Wetumpka, Montgomery), Wilkinson said officials in those cities understand the impact of bass fishing on the community.

"They get it," he said. "We've found partners in those cities who want to invest in building these events. With Montgomery being the birthplace of BASS, it's only fitting. For the foreseeable future, that's going to be the home of those two events."

With last year the initial year of the postseason format, Bassmaster officials really didn't know what to expect from events in terms of media coverage or drawing crowds.

"But the response exceeded all of our expectations," Wilkinson said. "When we produce these shows, it's bass fishing, but it's also entertainment. Montgomery, right now, is big on entertainment. They've built the amphitheater and are holding concerts there all the time. I think we had something like 12,000 people show up for the last day of the weigh-in and concert in the rain."

"We're going to be doing something this year with Maxwell Air Force Base and getting those guys involved. It's more about getting the community involved instead of just having a sporting event with passive viewership. We have some things in the works that will make that event truly a bookend to the Bassmaster Classic."

The one adjustment from last year's championship series is the date change. Last year's series was held in September.

"By moving it to July, we won't be competing with college football, which is a good idea," Wilkinson said with a laugh. "That way, we'll be able to do more on Saturday. If you're competing with Auburn and Alabama football, you're on the losing end no matter who you are."



Overfishing Designation Lifted From Snapper Stock

by David Rainer, Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources

Red snapper fishermen in the Gulf of Mexico got a Christmas present this holiday season. Problem is those anglers won't be able to open the package for at least a year.

After an update to the red snapper stock assessment late last year, the designation of "overfishing" has been lifted from the Gulf snapper stock. However, the "overfished" designation remains. Therefore, anglers will likely have to wait at least another year before red snapper bag limits and season dates are increased.

Vernon Minton, Director of the Marine Resources Division of the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, said getting rid of the "overfishing" stigma gives the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council great deal more leeway in the snapper management plan.

"That's real good news and we can start to look at increased quotas down the road," Minton said. "Part of the problem, though, because of the success of the program, last year anglers caught less fish but they weighed more. So they still went over the quota by more than a million pounds."

Minton also explained how the Gulf council uses the definitions of overfishing and overfished.

"Overfishing is a rate of taking that the fishery cannot sustain," said Minton, also a member of the Gulf council. "Typically, you'll start out with overfishing and you end up with a stock in an overfished state. Overfished is where you have fished a fishery so long that if it continues that way it would not be able to recover at all. You hit a state where recruitment into the fishery is not going to be there for the future."

"Right now we've stopped

the overfishing, but we're still overfished. Since we're not taking out more than is put in, it should develop the stock. Then at some point there won't be overfishing and not overfished at the same time."

Because of the Magnuson-Steven Act, all overfishing had to end by 2010 or more drastic measures would ensue. However, even though overfishing has ended, the Gulf council must still abide by certain guidelines to reach the overall goal of the fishery no longer being overfished.

The Gulf council will meet Feb. 1-4 at the Battle House in Mobile to set the 2010 seasons and bag limits for red snapper and other reef fish.

"This is the first time in the last 20 years that we've considered that red snapper were not undergoing overfishing," Minton said. "I'd say it's very promising and hope that the powers that be, primarily NOAA's Fisheries Service (formerly known as National Marine Fisheries Service), will continue to look at this picture in terms that science is starting to catch up with what the anglers are experiencing. That's promising. It's been this way for a long time."

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Large red snapper in the 20-pound range also provide proof that red snapper stocks are thriving.

OVERFISHING DESIGNATION LIFTED FROM SNAPPER STOCK – *continued*

It's just now that science or scientists say they see it, too. Hopefully, now we can move forward."

Under parameters the Gulf council's Scientific and Statistical Committee established for "Over Fishing Limit," the limit would be 9.26 million pounds in 2010 and steadily increase to 11.73 million pounds by 2015.

"The update showed harvest levels were still a bit too high in 2008; however, scientific projections are promising for 2009, indicating that the stock may improve enough to support higher harvest levels," said Dr. Bonnie Ponwith, Southeast Fisheries Science Center director for NOAA's Fisheries Service, in a news release. "This is very exciting news and is evidence of how science and management can work together to protect our natural resources."

The Gulf council is allowed to set the annual quota at 75 percent of the overfishing limit of that year, which ends up as 6.9 million pounds for the combined recreational and commercial sectors in 2010.

Bob Shipp, Chairman of the Gulf council and head of Marine Sciences at the University of South Alabama, said when last year's over-the-quota catch is subtracted, recreational anglers will be disappointed by what remains under the Christmas tree.

"It's not going to be too much of a present because even though the allowable catch is up 40 percent over last year we were over so much on last year's quota that it may not translate into too much good news for 2010," Shipp said. "Because the quota is based on tonnage rather than number

of fish caught that's why the recreational sector went over. The recreational quota was 2.5 million pounds and it looks like it's coming in at a little more than 4 million pounds. The reason is the bigger fish. The average size went from 3.5 pounds to 5 pounds. We will probably have a similar season and bag limit because of the overruns last year.

"However, the long-term trend I think is very positive. I think the (computer) models are starting to catch up with reality. I don't think they're there yet. I still think they way, way underestimate stocks. But the people who run the models are becoming aware of that, so they're trying to make updates to better reflect reality. The models are starting to appreciate the bigger fish. That's why the models are starting to look more positive. One of the problems is that the models have said we don't have enough old fish and too many young fish. If you've got too few at the top, models interpret that as those fish have been caught. That's not necessarily true."

Shipp insists the information that is plugged into the models is skewed because it comes from fishery dependent sources.

"Commercial guys target small fish because they get a better price," he said. "When that information is used in the model, the model interprets that as there aren't enough big fish. We need fishery independent data where you sample the population randomly. Even NMFS is fully aware that that's the problem."

Shipp and the USA Marine Sciences Department has

been performing snapper-tagging studies off the Alabama coast for years and it is apparent to him and his fellow researchers that the models and reality don't match.

"Part of our research is we sample artificial structures," he said. "Many of our tagged fish have been recaptured off of Florida. Florida is seeing more red snapper than ever in the past. We think it's because of our artificial reefs and our eggs and larvae that have caused that increase.

"Sean Powers on our staff is chairman of the panel that updated the (red snapper stock) assessment and presented the update to the Scientific and Statistical Committee. The committee voted 16-3 to accept the

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Red snapper rise to surface above an artificial reef off the Alabama Gulf Coast as evidence of a resurgence of the snapper population.



OVERFISHING DESIGNATION LIFTED FROM SNAPPER STOCK – *continued*

update. Sean has been out with us a dozen times and he knows what's out there."

Shipp said Roy Crabtree, southeast regional administrator for NOAA's Fisheries Service, admits that somehow the model is missing the huge quantity of red snapper that has shown up off of Florida.

"Dr. Crabtree said somehow or other we've got incorporate those fish, too," Shipp said. "He's on board, too, a little late in my opinion, but nevertheless, he's on board. I think he will also push for a new stock assessment. Right now, a stock assessment is not due for four more years. If we could get a stock assessment in 2011 then they'll be able to incorporate the new information."

In the meantime, Shipp said that removing the shackles of the overfishing declaration means a great deal to the average Gulf angler.

"It means we are out from under the gun of the 2010 deadline to end overfishing," he said. "If this update hadn't come in as well as it did, we would have had to set a quota of 2.5 million pounds. That's how low we would have had to go under the Magnuson-Stevens Act. That's commercial and recreational. That's almost bycatch. It would have been terrible. Now we've got a little breathing room."

Visit www.outdooralabama.com to learn more about the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources or to read previous columns by David Rainer.

Return to Percy

by Rusty Morrow, ACEOA Executive Director

The eastern Illinois sun was rising as I caught movement on the ridge above me. Barely settled in the stand, I grabbed my video camera that I had laid on a ledge in the shooting house. A nice eight point walked into view of the camera. He was in gun range but not what I was looking for. He needed a few more years to grow.

Three does came down the ridge in front of me and fed right past my stand. The young buck went into the timber to my left. This morning was bitterly cold at 17 degrees with about a 5 to 10 mph wind. Everything was frozen solid with a heavy frost. It seemed that all the deer were heading to bed.

When I was first getting situated in the shooting house before light, four does had come from behind me and headed into the autumn olive trees. Deer movement settled down for awhile and I was able to unpack my day pack in preparation for a full day in the shooting house. With the early excitement, I had forgotten to place my 209 primer in my Thompson Center Pro Hunter 50 cal. muzzle loader. It was a good thing the first buck was not a shooter.

Finally settled in, I caught movement to my left on the wood line. At first glance I thought it was the buck I had



seen earlier. Once I put my binoculars on him I realized it wasn't. When you see an Illinois Giant, you know it without a doubt. I reached for my Thompson and slid open the shooting house window. The huge 8-point moved back to the edge of the woods and into cover. I grabbed my grunt call and doe in heat bleat can. As I was using them together the buck reappeared and crossed the opening about 110 yards from my stand. Nothing I did would make him stop. As quickly as he appeared, he again disappeared into cover. He reappeared again in five minutes in thick cover on the edge of a field. I ranged him at 185 yards but he would not offer a clean shot. My Thompson was certainly capable. I felt sure he would bed nearby since I had seven does in the area as well. It was about 8:00 a.m. and I had all day.

I have visited Ron and Jill Doering three previous times at the Hunt Club in Percy, Illinois. I went once to duck hunt and twice to deer hunt. Each visit had been something very special and always left me eager to return.

During my first deer hunt at the Hunt Club, I harvested a very nice thirteen point that grossed 156 1/8 BC. My second was even more memorable even though I didn't harvest a deer that year. I learned a lot about having a videographer in the stand with me. Getting a kill on video is not as easy as it looks. Jackie Bushman really enjoyed

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RETURN TO PERCY – *continued*

showing a great miss on his show and you probably have already guessed that it was mine.

I believe if you hunt deer enough you miss from time to time. Now, believe me, I have a volume of excuses to why I missed that beautiful 10 point with split G2s. I still have dreams about that hunt.

Ron and Jill run a 5-star operation at the Hunt Club. Ron owns about ten thousand acres of unbelievable duck, whitetail deer, and turkey habitat. The diversity of the land provides everything the Illinois Giants love – cover, crops, and the opportunity to grow and mature. Ron has a strict management program that only allows mature bucks to be taken. He insists upon a 140 inch minimum on mature four year old and older bucks. While visiting Ron, I have learned that the wait for the right deer is worth it.

Pictured in this article are two other hunters in camp with me this past December. Jerry Fitzgerald harvested this unbelievable 25 point. When I left to return home, it had not been scored but it was sure to score well over 200 inches Lloyd Parker of Brandon Mississippi harvested a remarkable 17-point. It had matching kickers (3) off the G2s. It will probably go in the high 190s BC. Just to be around this class of deer is worth the trip – just to know that your number may come up one day.

There were several other really nice deer killed on the four day hunt. Lloyd's son, Jackson Parker, killed a really nice buck with a really strange bladed antler coming off his G1. His deer outweighed his dad's 17-point by about 50 pounds. It was truly a giant.

Now, it would be unfair to only feature the deer hunting at the Hunt Club because there is much more available. Jill's kitchen is one of the best things about the Hunt Club. She personally sees that you are treated like a king. The meals are superb and the service is excellent. That alone is worth the entire trip. If you think I am exaggerating, go see for yourself. I'll be anxious to hear from you when your return.

Gary Fitzgerald is always on hand at the Hunt Club to capture your trophy on film. His photography business provides you with all the photos you need so that the memories of the Hunt Club experience are always close by.

The rest of the day was spent constantly searching the wood line for the giant 8 point to reappear. Somehow, he had eluded me. He will only get bigger and older!

I watched two really nice bucks chasing does across the



County Line Highway. My range finder only goes to 600 yards but I could clearly see horns on both deer with my naked eye. The smaller of the two was killed by a hunter on the last afternoon of the hunt.

I had spent the first two days of the four day hunt hunting the spoils. These are reclaimed strip mines. They are covered with autumn olive and oaks. The crevices provide natural cover and corridors to travel from bedding areas to crops and feeding areas. When in these areas, the deer can be very elusive. They can appear without warning and suddenly disappear. Dozing is not an option!

I saw at least four shooter bucks the first two days and probably 20 other bucks that needed one or two more years.

To hunt Illinois during gun deer season and archery season, you must apply for a tag with the IDNR. Archery tags are easier to obtain. Gun seasons have been difficult

but obtainable. I was unable to draw for several years but got lucky in 2009. Last year was the first year I drew the second gun season which was a four day hunt. The third season is muzzle loader only. The other two seasons are shotgun or muzzle loader.

Ron and Jill have become corporate sponsors at ACEOA and you will find their ad in this issue of *ACE Magazine*.

I would never encourage anyone to leave Alabama to hunt elsewhere; but sometimes you must experience what other states have to offer. I've always believed you must see for yourself.



Duck Hunting Experience

John and Brodie Croyle, along with Randy Ryals of the Avery Pro Staff, Michael and Lamar Boyd of Beaver Dam Hunting Services, Vince Wanninger and Jacob Wanninger, took boys from the Ranch on a duck hunting adventure! This was the 2nd year that Randy Ryals has coordinated this incredible weekend, and done everything to facilitate it – thanks Randy! They presented each boy with a goody bag, which included a Sportsmans Travel Bag, blind bag, camouflage clothing, DVD, t-shirts, lanyards, and duck calls (compliments of Avery, GreenHead Gear, and Rich N Tone). Also, Ducks Unlimited gave each boy an honorary membership as a Ducks Unlimited Greenwing member. This year we also received both material and financial support from Central Alabama Hunting Retriever Club, Tuscaloosa Chevrolet, and Crimson Tech. They shot skeet on Friday, (donated by Main Street Printing in Springville, AL). It was an extra special day, as it was Brodie's birthday. So they took Brodie out for a birthday dinner where the boys were able to talk and just have a good time with Brodie and Kelly, along with John and Tee. They then hunted the banks of Beaver Dam on Saturday and Sunday – and were home in time to watch the Superbowl! Randy Ryals said, "This hunt is the highlight of my year. Each year we kill roughly 600 ducks, but none are more special or memorable than seeing the boys and kids from the Big Oak Ranch holding up their first birds with big smiles on their faces." Thanks SO much Randy and everyone who helped make this trip possible.



Hunter Education Volunteer 2009 Dove Shoot

by Thad Holmes

About three years ago Clem Parnell and Thad Holmes contacted Hunter Education Coordinator Jenks Altier with an idea to strengthen retention of Volunteer Hunter Education Instructors. We developed a list of volunteer instructors that would commit to one HE field day per month. In appreciation of that commitment by the volunteers, the CEO's of Baldwin and Mobile Co.'s would hold at least one sporting event per year for the volunteers.

Thad and Clem contacted and developed sponsorships for food, equipment and funding that would allow the Mobile and Baldwin County CEO's to coordinate one to two sport-

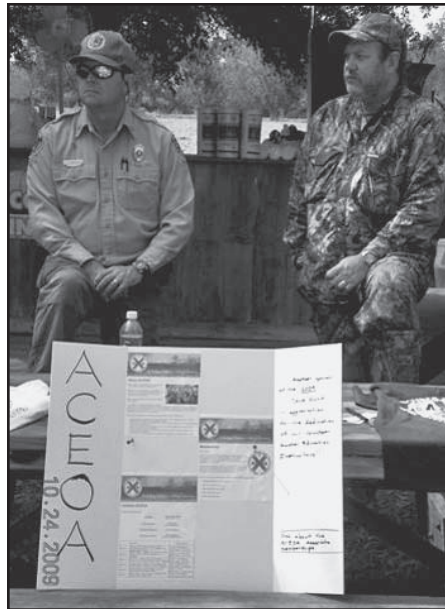
ing events each year. The events are an annual dove shoot/pig cooking held in the fall and a Sporting Clays Competition Shoot in the spring. Both events have been extremely successful for volunteer instructor retention and much appreciated by everyone.

Our outstanding sponsors have made these events come to fruition and we would like to especially thank the following:

Alabama Conservation Enforcement Officers Association
Wes Moore and Alligator Alley in Summerdale, AL
Campbell's Hardware in Robertsedale, AL
Gary Cox and Bushy Creek Clays in Perdido, AL



Waiting for something to happen.



ACEOA display.



Jenks, Mike, Maggie and Maggie.



Any doves landing over here, are mine.



HUNTER EDUCATION VOLUNTEER 2009 DOVE SHOOT – *continued*



Andy the chef.



Lunch was delicious.



2009 HEI Volunteer Dove Shoot.



Instructor fellowship.





Is This Enough Orange?

by Rusty Morrow and Keith Mickle

The sun had set, and another day of deer season was behind me. With the mud and burrs of the day still clinging to my uniform, my lovely wife Gayle, had set a feast for me. With only thirteen days of deer season remaining, I could feel the stress beginning to subside and I could mentally see the light at the end to the tunnel. Little did I know that my ole partner Keith and his friend Joe McClure were plotting to ratchet up my blood pressure and snuff out that mental light! It all began with a knock at my front door.

I opened the door to find a large “floppy hat” sitting atop of what appeared to be a vaguely familiar homeless person. First words out of “Floppy Hat’s” mouth; “Are you the Game Warden?” My first thought was “My God, these hunters are like stray puppies, they are starting to following me home. My second thought was “He’s not too bright because I’m standing here in full uniform. “Floppy Hat” said, “I heard at the Shell Station I gotta wear Hunter Orange to hunt deer tomorrow!!” I explained; “Yes, you must wear Hunter Orange to be legal.” That’s when “Floppy Hat” stepped into my personal space. And I backed up while he whined and sniffled about the cost of a cheap orange vest. As I further explained, that wearing 144 square inches of Hunter Orange was for HIS safety,

“Floppy Hat” getting mad about Hunter Orange, stepped into my personal space again and I backed up. With my anger rising, I patiently explained to “Floppy Hat” that wearing a Hunter Orange Cap would meet his legal requirements, the cost of one cap would not break his break his

bank and keep him outta trouble...That’s when “Floppy Hat” stepped into my personal space again, for the LAST dang time, cause I DID NOT BACK UP. I’m 6’7” that put “Floppy Hat’s” nose about three inches from middle button on my uniform shirt.

I was about to meet “Floppy Hat’s” “legal requirements” for Assault and Battery, while I broke something other than his bank, and changed his color worries from Hunter Orange to Black and Blue! But he shocked me with a swift move, with his nose only inches from my chest “Floppy Hat” snatched off the hat, stood on his toes, he thrust the top of his head under my nose and in a hysterical screechy voice yelled; “Well, is this enough orange?!!”

There I stood my mouth hanging open, as stared down at a Hunter Orange Mohawk hairdo! The Hunter Orange Mohawk Hairdo had been hiding under the floppy camo hat like some repugnant road kill parrot. The owner of the Orange Mohawk just stood there. That’s when I heard the first snorts of laughter coming from the dark. The owner of the Orange Mohawk just stood there, but now with a smirk. When the snorts of laughter became uncontrollable, I recognized the laugh and then saw my Ole Partner Keith Mickle emerging from the dark. That’s when I recognized Joe McClure, a.k.a. “Floppy Hat”! I had been had in royal fashion.

Until I retired I never heard the question; “Officer, how much is enough Hunter Orange?” without having some sort of mental twitch or flashback.

Remember Keith and Joe, pay back is...



Forever Wild Secures Recreational Lease

by David Rainer, Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources

During the hectic holiday season last year, one item of important business conducted by the Forever Wild program got somewhat overlooked.

In an unprecedented move, Forever Wild secured a long-term agreement on a large tract of land vitally important to outdoors recreation in central Alabama. Forever Wild and Molpus Timberlands Management, a timberland investment management organization, concluded lengthy negotiations for the purchase of a 93-year recreational lease within two of the state's largest and most heavily used Wildlife Management Areas (WMA). The project includes more than 61,000 acres in four central Alabama counties for recreational use, including hunting and fishing.

The transaction encompasses about 27,858 acres within the Bibb and Shelby County portions of the Cahaba River WMA, and 33,280 acres within Tuscaloosa and Walker counties for the Mulberry Fork WMA. Both areas have been part of the state's WMA system for the past decade, and are now secured under the long-term lease.

What is unprecedented is the way the land was secured, according to Greg Lein of the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources' State Lands Division, who oversees the Forever Wild program.

"This was the first time the board had been presented with an opportunity where it was less than fee-simple purchase," Lein said. "Some members of the board questioned whether this was a Forever Wild project because it wasn't forever. This sparked a pretty healthy discussion. In the end the board recognized that the law and the Legislature and crafters of this amendment were wise enough to give the board this flexible tool. The law allows them to buy interest in land. The board acknowledged this was the opportunity in front of them. The people with the lease were offering the remainder of the lease. The people who owned the dirt were not offering the dirt. The board acknowledged that if they didn't do anything that we were going to lose these 61,000 acres from the WMA system.

"It would have been a significant blow. The last two years, we've already lost a lot of land out of the WMA system. If it weren't for Forever Wild and the progress made this past 15 years, we'd really be feeling these losses. We lost the Covington WMA. We lost the West Jefferson WMA. That was more than 50,000 acres."

The lease agreement also gives Forever Wild an upper hand should the land become available for fee-simple purchase.

"The board recognized this was the first important step – secure the lease," Lein said. "Then if the dirt becomes available, they can contemplate that opportunity. What

they've done is bought 93 years to negotiate it being forever wild. That's a long time from the public hunting standpoint. Ninety-three years is longer than we've had a public hunting program in Alabama. The fact they got this for less than \$100 an acre is really a leveraged acquisition."

Another advantage of this particular lease agreement is the state will not require any startup costs because the associated parcels are already part of the WMA system.

Corky Pugh, Director of the Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries Division, said the lease negotiated by Forever Wild changes the management strategy for those WMAs.

"That long-term lease allows us to manage that land with a long-term view and make investments in terms of on-the-ground improvements that we could not make with a shorter-term arrangement," Pugh said. "It also gives the hunting public assurance that this land will be available for a good, long time for hunting.

"Additionally, when you consider the absolute need for us to provide opportunities for the rank-and-file hunters of this state, it's only growing more significant with the current economic conditions."

The proximity of Cahaba River and Mulberry Fork to the metropolitan Birmingham area made this transaction even more important. But the impact ripples throughout the state.

"Another thing about Alabama investing in public hunting opportunities is the very large economic impact that hunting has on the state," Pugh said. "State and local taxes that come from hunting-related direct expenditures are astronomical. It varies from large retail establishments in cities all the way to the smallest remote towns in the state. During hunting season, a lot of those places are thriving because of the opportunity for people to hunt.

"The economic impact of hunting in Alabama is \$1.4 billion annually. That's \$847 million in direct expenditures and the sales tax alone is \$83 million dollars. That's a major impact."

Lein said if the lease agreement had not been finalized, those WMA properties would have soon been in private hands.

"We never go around trumpeting how close to the precipice we are, but this was a heckuva save, a heckuva save," Lein said. "Molpus is in the business to make their clients money. They were the ones who had withdrawn the West Jefferson lease and indicated this would happen to Mulberry Fork and Cahaba River if a lease could not be negotiated.

"I personally like these departures from the normal because it shows how flexible Forever Wild can be. I think

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FOREVER WILD SECURES RECREATIONAL LEASE – *continued*

that sparks the thought process from the staff and board and contemplate what else the program could be doing. We've had a lot of calls from out of state wanting to know about this project. Kentucky called. Michigan called. They wanted to know how we did this."

Lein also said companies with land in Alabama have also inquired about the process involved in managing land for different uses.

"We've been managing WMAs for years where we don't have all the rights," he said. "We're often managing under

someone else's timber rights. We know how to do that. That's not a bad thing. It's nicer to have full control. But when you're trying to get a lot of bang for your buck, this is a really interesting opportunity.

"Here we are talking about the reauthorization of Forever Wild and we've got a brand new example of other opportunities that might be out there if Forever Wild is continued."

Visit www.outdooralabama.com to learn more about the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources or to read previous columns by David Rainer.





The Casselman Case

by Lt. Mike McNeil

Dusty Casselman, 37, of Georgiana was convicted in Butler County District Court on September 22, 2009, on ten charges including illegally transporting and selling feral swine as well as several counts of hunting without permission. Judge McDonald Russell ordered Casselman to pay \$3,244 in fines and court costs. Casselman also received a 360 day suspended jail sentence, one year of unsupervised probation, and a two-year suspension of his hunting privileges.

The investigation of Casselman's activities began after local Conservation Enforcement Officers Don Reaves and Stacy Lush received complaints from citizens

during the fall of 2007. The complaints alleged that in addition to feral swine he was also taking deer and selling both species. After checking with numerous property owners, the officers found that Casselman had several permits to hunt hogs but none for deer. One landowner complained of his hunting in non-permitted areas but didn't want to file a warrant at the time. The properties involved were spread over the entire county making checking a specific area difficult in terms of catching him on the property. It was also discovered that Casselman is originally from Florida so a possibility of transporting game or hunting across state lines was also a problem. Due to these factors the Covert Unit was contacted with a request to initiate a detail with Casselman as the target.

While covert officers were making contacts and lining up hunts with Casselman, the uniformed officers continued to work him in the known complaint areas. Neither unit had much luck initially but another complaint in the spring of 2008 gave up a new target area to work. Dr. George Tisdale owns a large acreage south of Georgiana near Casselman's home. Dr. Tisdale had given him permission to hunt a small tract of about 20 acres immediately in front of Casselman's house. During the deer season a guest of Dr. Tisdale's son had caught Casselman on some of the adjoining non-permitted property; Dr. Tisdale did not wish to bring charges but said he had taken away all permits extended to Casselman.

In the fall, Officer Reaves, Lt. Mike McNeil, and Mark Lewis, Property Manager for Dr. Tisdale, began watching the area near Casselman's house. Video cameras and game-tracker cameras were also employed on trails and roads leading off of the property. Additional information gained on Casselman indicated that he might be hunting the Tisdale Property at night as well as during the day. The officers and the property manager decided to try to catch Casselman leaving his house by watching from the forest during the early part of the night. The trio had no luck on the target but watched one of his neighbors, two doors down, shine the same property one night while holding a gun on his shoulder. Due to the close proximity to Casselman's house and the amount of time and effort involved, it was decided to take no actions on that event until closing the case on Casselman.

Throughout this time the covert officers had been building a good rapport and several cases. Their efforts resulted not only in several admissions of guilt by Casselman but also photos of him with deer taken from the "hog only" properties. He provided the photos by e-mailing them to his new "hunting buddy" on the covert unit. Later he sold live feral hogs to the same "friend." The trail cameras were also paying off as they provided several shots of Casselman, and in one instance, his girlfriend, hunting on the Tisdale Property. She did not have a gun in the photo and in a later interview she confirmed that he was hunting deer on that date. It was agreed between covert and field officers to end the operation and make the arrests on Casselman. He was taken into custody on the morning of May 20, 2009. Prior to being placed in jail, he was read his Miranda rights and, after being shown the various pictures, gave a full confession on all charges.

On February 24, 2010 warrants were issued by the District Court of Butler County for Casselman's arrest for failure to pay fines and costs in the above cases. On that same date Casselman was taken into custody and placed in jail. He served a week in jail before his father paid the balance of his fines and costs.



DCNR Honor Guard Unveiled

by David Rainer, Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources

In its first meeting of the year, the Alabama Conservation Advisory Board witnessed the unveiling of a new honor guard, unanimously passed a resolution of support for the Forever Wild program and entertained ideas on enhancing trout fishing in the Sipsey Fork below the Lewis Smith Dam.

Meeting at the Capitol Auditorium in Montgomery, Conservation Commissioner Barnett Lawley introduced the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) Honor Guard, which presented the colors at the beginning of the meeting.

Lawley said the honor guard was formed in 2009 to provide distinguished and honorable representation of the Alabama DCNR in times of mourning and celebration.

"The honor guard strives to make us all proud of honoring fallen officers, showing respect to their families and preserving and celebrating the traditions of the great State of Alabama," Lawley said. "Dedicated officers donate their personal time and energy to assure that the honor guard represents DCNR in an appropriate manner. Its members are located throughout the state. Honor guard members practice and are available to serve through three teams – north, central and south teams.

"The honor guard is ready to represent the department at various events and meetings as directed by the commissioner. The teams are available at a family's request for conservation enforcement officers, retirees, advisory board members and other government or political personnel. The honor guard will be an excellent tool in expanding the outreach efforts of the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources."

After the invocation and presentation of colors, the board began to hear public testimony and the first was a request from Tim Gothard of the Alabama Wildlife Federation for the advisory board to pass a resolution in support of the Forever Wild program, which will expire in 2012 unless reauthorized by the Alabama Legislature.

"The Forever Wild program has been extremely, extremely important to the things that this advisory board actually represents," Gothard said. "In the 17 years that the Forever Wild program has been around, Forever Wild has purchased about 200,000 acres for public access, wildlife management areas, recreation areas and the like. In 2007 and 2008



PHOTO BY DAVID RAINER

The Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources Honor Guard presents colors at the Conservation Advisory Board meeting Feb. 6 in Montgomery.

alone, we lost around 50,000 acres from our wildlife management areas for public hunting. Forever Wild has been the primary source to replenish public hunting lands and expand public hunting lands.

"If you look at the 200,000 acres Forever Wild has purchased in the last 17 years, I believe about 95-96 percent of those acres have actually provided public hunting opportunities for our citizens. That is vitally important. As our population continues to grow; as the value of private hunting lands continue to grow – which is something we're all for – public hunting lands are going to be extremely important in maintaining that balance of availability of lands for our citizens to hunt. It's going to be very important that we elevate in the eyes of the general public, in the eyes of our legislators the importance of the Forever Wild program so far and the Forever Wild program going forward."

Gothard said the Protect Forever Wild Coalition has been formed with more than 60 organizations involved in promoting the reauthorization of Forever Wild in its current form. Gothard asked the advisory board to go on record as being in favor of Forever Wild reauthorization. Board member

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DCNR HONOR GUARD UNVEILED – *continued*

Bill Hatley of Gulf Shores introduced the requested resolution, which passed unanimously.

Advisory board member Grady Hartzog of Eufaula served for 12 years on the Forever Wild board and said he knows of no other program that has been as successful as Forever Wild.

“I had the privilege to serve on the Forever Wild board for two terms,” Hartzog said. “It’s the best program Alabama has ever had. I challenge each one out there to contact your legislator and express your support for Forever Wild because it provides land for you and your kids and grand-kids into perpetuity.”

In other testimony, two chapters of Trout Unlimited asked the board to consider setting aside a portion of the Sipsey Fork below Lewis Smith Dam as an area for catch-and-release only with a restriction of only artificial lures. The group also asked for an increase in stocking for rainbow trout with the addition of brown trout. The trout anglers also asked the board to consider a trout stamp to offset any costs related to their requests. A request was also made that a no-culling rule be implemented for trout – that any fish added to a stringer or container designed to hold fish could not be returned to the water and must count toward the daily creel limit. Also, one member of the trout fishing contingent asked that a portion of the Sipsey Fork below Lewis Smith Dam be closed to boat traffic.

The Alabama Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries Division (WFF) currently stocks rainbow trout in the Sipsey Fork that are procured through a swap of striped bass with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). Fisheries Chief Stan Cook said USFWS has been approached about increasing the swap but indicated the federal agency did not indicate any interest to do so. Cook also said the introduction of brown trout, a non-native species, must be studied to ensure it would not negatively impact native species before any stocking will be considered. Corky Pugh, WFF Director, said the department would work on a no-culling regulation that could be considered at the next board meeting. Pugh also said that the impact of a catch-and-

release area on people who use natural bait should be considered before they are excluded from any section of the Sipsey Fork.

Because board rules prohibit voting on any motion unless it had been discussed at a previous meeting, Hatley indicated he will bring a motion before the board at its March 13 meeting in Gadsden to allow hunters with crossbows to use sighting mechanisms with magnification. Current regulations do not allow scopes or any sighting systems with magnification for archery equipment, which includes crossbows.

Board member Ross Self of Gulf Shores asked the board to consider changing the recommended South Zone dove season dates to allow for hunting in September. Self suggested the dates of Sept. 11-19, Oct. 9-Nov. 14 and Dec. 18-Jan. 9.

“From personal observation – I’ve made trips all over Baldwin County – there are a lot of birds in the South Zone in the middle of September,” Self said. “Then for some reason, I don’t know why, they disappear. I’ve talked to a lot of people and legislators in my district and they all want a season in September. And biological science indicates there is no biological impact with these changes.”

In updates on action pending in the Alabama Legislature, John Thomas Jenkins, Director of Marine Police, said the so-called “boat theft” bill is again on the agendas of both houses. The bill would essentially make it illegal to alter any vessel identification or motor identification numbers.

Chris Blankenship of the Marine Resources Division said two bills are pending – one that deals with a comprehensive oyster management plan that includes enhancing the state’s oyster reefs, while the other would establish a non-resident pier saltwater fishing license. Blankenship also said several regulations would be proposed to bring state saltwater fishing regulations in line with federal guidelines, as well as simplify regulations dealing with the gill-net fishery.

Visit www.outdooralabama.com to learn more about the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources or to read previous columns by David Rainer.



Kid's Korner

Tell us about your favorite hunt or fishing trip. Kids 16 and under may submit.
Please send entrees for Kid's Korner to rusty_morrow@yahoo.com.



Chase Little, from Lowndes County, bagged this nice 8-point during 2010 hunting season. He loves to hunt with his dad, Jason Little, and his granddad, Rusty Morrow. He is eight-years-old.



Statewide Deer Harvest Likely Average for Recent Season

by David Rainer, Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources

It may take a few more years to determine what an “average” deer season is with the advent of the three-buck limit for the 2007-2008 season. But as far as Chris Cook, Alabama Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries (WFF) wildlife biologist who specializes in white-tailed deer, can tell, the 2009-2010 season will likely fit in the “average” category.

Cook, who queried WFF biologists and deer processors around the state and reviewed deer harvest data collected from Alabama’s wildlife management areas (WMAs), said the success deer hunters experienced pretty much ran the gamut of what could be expected.

“In some parts of the state, it was average or maybe a littler better than average,” Cook said. “In others, it appeared a lot slower than in a typical year. That was the story even within some of our WFF districts with some areas having a good year and others being below average.

“Everyone seems to attribute (the slow areas) to the same factors – a lot of acorns throughout the state and good browse growing conditions (rain and mild temperatures) on into hunting season. We had some really cold weather that knocked the browse back in late December and early January. This impacted the deer movement and deer sightings, especially considering the way many hunters choose to hunt these days. They tend to sit on a food plot whether there is food in the woods or not.”

In addition to a record-breaking cold snap for the first half of January, hunters also had to deal with downpours on most weekends during the latter part of the season.

“Our wildlife management areas were affected the same way,” Cook said. “Some had a really good year and some were off. The WMAs likely were more affected by the weather than by food availability and hunting tactics. Participation was way off on most weekends with a lot of rain. When the weather was good, the WMAs usually had good hunts.

“I guess this would be a typical year. It wasn’t a unanimously good year or a bad year from one end of the state to the other. When you start talking statewide, most years are going to be highly variable.”

Cook said he talked to several processors and one expressed an observation that the three-buck limit had affected the animals brought to his facility.

“His perception was there were a lot less yearling bucks brought in to be processed,” Cook said. “Of course, deer processors won’t see every deer that’s killed in an area, but his perception was there were more bucks two years

or older brought in than in the past. There’s no way to tell whether that’s attributable to the buck limit or not.”

Of course, the weather has a great deal of influence of what the hunters and processors see.

“When you have a mild winter and lot of acorns, the number of deer killed is going to be down,” Cook said. “If we get cold weather prior to the rut and during the rut, the deer harvest is going to be great. Cold weather at the end of the season also can really improve the harvest due to a lack of available food. I know some processors were turning people away during the 2008-2009 season when the weather got cold because they didn’t have any room in their coolers to hang more deer. I didn’t see that in my part of the state this season.”

Cook also said rutting activity across the state was as varied as the hunting success. He said the ancestry of the deer herd has a significant affect on when rutting activity occurs. Deer from Michigan were stocked in Lawrence and Winston counties in the 1920s, while some other areas were stocked with deer from North Carolina. These areas have maintained an early rut in November and early December. Deer from Texas and Wisconsin and some of the barrier islands off the coast of Georgia were stocked in many Georgia counties that border the Chattahoochee River. Those deer also rut much earlier than most native Alabama whitetails and appear to influence the early rut dates we see in portions of the counties that border this part of Georgia. In most of Alabama, deer were stocked from the populations in southwest Alabama, hence the later rut experienced in most of the state.

“Oakmulgee WMA was one of the areas originally stocked with deer from North Carolina in the ‘30s and ‘40s,” Cook said. “Deer in that area have retained the earlier rut of their ancestors. They rut in early and mid December. Hunters typically take bucks that are chasing does and bucks were beat up from fighting on the hunts in late November through mid December.

“On the other hand, one of the biggest bucks brought to the check station this year during one of the December hunts showed no signs of actively participating in the rut. His tarsal glands were not stained dark like is typical for a mature buck at that time of year. His ear was split and he was beat up from fighting, but he didn’t appear to have been making scrapes or anything. I guess there is always at least one oddball in the crowd.”

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STATEWIDE DEER HARVEST LIKELY AVERAGE FOR RECENT SEASON – *continued*

Cook said intense herd management can influence the date of the rut; however, management can only do so much. Genetics is probably the most influential factor, at least here in Alabama.

“You can’t move the rut from January to November, but I have seen the peak of breeding moved earlier by a couple of weeks through intensive herd management,” Cook said. “On one particular property in Hale County, the hunters were very aggressive with doe harvest and very selective on what bucks were taken. After seven years, their average date of conception had moved from January 24th to January 8th. In the seventh year, none of the deer collected were bred later than January 14th.

“Not everybody may want to go to that extent, but with a more moderate approach, you can definitely shorten the (breeding) window and do a better job of ensuring the does are bred on the first cycle.”

WFF sends out a mail survey each year to gather information about the hunting seasons and when this year’s data is analyzed, Cook doesn’t expect anything out of the ordinary. The impact of the three-buck limit will take more time to quantify.

“When all the numbers come in from the mail survey I think it is going to end up being what should be considered an average year for statewide deer harvest,” Cook said. “But because of the buck limit, the ‘average’ year is going to be different from what it was three years ago. It’s going

to take a little while to see how the buck limit will affect the long-term harvest trends.”

Cook did say there were some very nice bucks taken during the latest season and a rainy year and abundant mast crop probably contributed to that fact.

“I saw several exceptional bucks taken this year, including a 160-inch buck from Greene County and a 15-point taken from Stockton, which is a really nice buck for anywhere in Alabama, especially Baldwin County,” he said. “The supervising wildlife biologist in southeast Alabama told me he personally observed more big bucks taken in his area this year than in any year he can remember. We had some really nice bucks taken on our WMAs in west central Alabama, as well. People have told me of taking more big-bodied deer (200 pounds plus) this season. The abundant rain during the late spring and summer should have made conditions very good for growing antlers, and the heavy acorn crop helped deer put on additional weight last fall.”

Cook said WFF will again hold antler-scoring sessions across the state for its Records of Alabama’s White-tailed Deer program. Scoring sessions will start in May to allow for the mandatory 60-day drying time for antlers and will be held periodically throughout the summer. Check www.outdooralabama.com to find out more about the program and a schedule of scoring sessions in the coming weeks.



Alabama Department of
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Cullman Community Archery Park Expands Facilities

by Stuart Goldsby

The Cullman Community Archery Park will soon have a new 1,500 square foot pavilion complete with restrooms thanks to Archery Trade Association and an Easton Sports Development Foundation grant. The new pavilion, which is currently under construction, will be completed by the end of March. The new pavilion will provide shade and shelter for archers using the park on a day to day basis and during tournament activities.

A smaller gazebo-style pavilion at the start of the walk-through-range and playground equipment is also slated to be installed later this year. The gazebo is planned for completion on May 1 and will be built by Cullman Parks and Recreation, Cullman Home Builders Association, Heritage Archery Club, and Cullman High School Building Construction classes. The expansion of the Cullman facilities highlights the rise of archery as a recreational activity that can be enjoyed by anyone regardless of physical ability.

According to Stuart Goldsby, Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries (WFF) Hunter Education Coordinator for North Alabama, the Cullman Community Archery Park is continuing to gain popularity because of the commitment of the project's partners including: Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (ADCNR), the City of Cullman Parks and Recreation, the Archery Trade Association, and the Easton Sports Development Foundation.

"The Cullman City and County governments, area schools, local clubs, and retailers in the archery industry have worked together to help this concept come alive," Goldsby said. "All the partners involved in this project understand that archery not only promotes beneficial life skills, but that it is also a very safe and fun family-oriented sport."

To accommodate public interest in the sport, archery lessons, local amateur youth tournaments, and Junior Olympic Archery Division (JOAD) archery programs are now being offered at the park. Other scheduled events include various Heritage Archery Club tournaments and a statewide National Archery in the Schools tournament on March 10 -11, hosted by Good Hope High School in Cullman Co. The Good Hope High School tournament offers schools participating in the WFF-sponsored program to qualify for the state tournament on April 22, 2010 at the Birmingham Jefferson Civic Center. For more information about classes and tournaments visit the park Web site, www.cullmancityarchery.com.

The Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources promotes wise stewardship, management and enjoyment of Alabama's natural resources through five divisions: Marine Police, Marine Resources, State Lands, State Parks, and Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries. To learn more about ADCNR, visit www.outdooralabama.com.

Biologist Introduces Youth To Art of Trapping

by David Rainer, Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources

When Mike Sievering, supervising wildlife biologist for the Alabama Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries Division in the west central district, started trapping seminars three years ago, he had no idea what kind of response would result.

With one seminar left in February, Sievering would have to rate the response as outstanding. The one seminar that started the phenomenon in 2007 has evolved into four programs a year.

"I was sitting and talking with Jackie Malone, the National Trappers Association's Alabama representative, about how trapping is an art that's dying and we're losing kids," Sievering said. "We talked about how we need to get these kids outdoors. We did the first seminar in '07 at Swan Creek. I limit my classes to 20 because of the help needed to pull this off. I don't have age limits. I've had 6-year-olds and 22-year-olds. I had two college co-eds that first year and they were trapping machines. They did better than the boys did."

Each seminar lasts two-and-a-half days, always on weekends. Friday night is all classroom activity.

"We talk about the historical aspects of trapping and trapping responsibilities," Sievering said. "We talk about trapping laws and regulations, fur-bearer management and biological information related to all fur-bearing animals in Alabama."

Saturday's session starts at 8 a.m. with discussion on different types of traps and snares, as well as how to prepare the traps and different anchoring systems. Then it's on to preparing baits and lures, which Sievering says is an art in itself. Mid-morning, the students break into groups with mentors and go outside.

"All these guys helping me are volunteers," Sievering said. "They are paid nothing. They are a part of the

Alabama Trapper and Predator Association. USDA Wildlife Services helps a lot. We also have the Alabama Hunter Education Association and this year several representatives from the U.S. Forest Service, Alabama Forestry Commission and Alabama Cooperative Extension System help. It's a joint effort among all these organizations to make this thing happen.

"Each mentor has two students, and I insist that a parent or guardian comes with the student. They seem to



retain more and the parents seem to get more enjoyment than the kids a lot of times."

The mentors discuss the different types of sets – water sets and land sets. After lunch, the students and mentors head to the trap site locations, either on private land where permission has been granted or on wildlife management areas. Students then set their own trap line of a between 6 and 12 traps per student. The next morning, the students and mentors get up before daylight, meet at a central location and then run the trap lines. After the

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BIOLOGIST INTRODUCES YOUTH TO ART OF TRAPPING – *continued*



animals are collected, the mentors demonstrate how to properly handle fur to prepare it for market.

"It's a total package," Sievering said. "Some people look at it and say there's no way you can do these things. You can, but there's a lot involved in it. What's good about this program is we've had several state trapping organizations come to Alabama to see what we're doing because it's really a pilot program.

"We've had people from as far away as Illinois to volunteer their services to teach these kids. We've got one coming from New Jersey for our February class. It's catching on." Last year, Sievering and Malone received a national award from the National Trappers Association.

All accolades aside, Sievering said the benefits derived by the participating youth make it worth the effort.

"It's a good deal for kids," he said. "It gives them another opportunity to get out in the woods and experience something they've never experienced. It makes them better woodsmen because of the things they learn from these trappers.

"One thing I tell them during the program is the learning curve is cut down significantly for the students. I've got guys who volunteer who have trapped for 30-35 years and are willing to give that knowledge to a brand new student. I mean, it's a good deal."

In the late '70s and early '80s more than 6,000 trapping licenses were sold annually in Alabama. When the fur market crashed in the mid '80s, the license sales dropped dramatically. Last year there were about 450 licenses sold statewide.

"Because of that drop, we're seeing a dramatic increase in predators – foxes, coyotes, raccoons – predators that are preying on game species," Sievering said. "If you get a heavy predator population in an area, it's not good for nesting turkeys. So we're teaching the kids that predator management is part of this and helps balance the ecosystem. Trapping is a great wildlife management tool."

Sievering and his volunteers also convey how much excitement trapping can generate.

"The thing about trapping, like I tell kids, 'you know that feeling you get when you get up on Christmas morning, you can hardly wait?'" Sievering said. "Trapping is it's just like that, because every day is Christmas morning. You never know what you're going to catch. That excitement rolls through the kids to the parents. I've had them tell me they

couldn't sleep the night before because they were so excited about what they were going to catch. That makes me feel good, and it makes the mentors feel great, too."

Another goal is to keep the practice of trapping from becoming a lost art.

"I can't say it was almost gone, but it was dying a prolonged death," Sievering said. "Everything in today's world is a quick fix. You can sit there with your video games or computer and do whatever you want. It's like we're a society of instant gratification. This art was not being passed on. That's why we sat down and said, 'we've got to try to stop this before it's gone. Guys like me in their 50s and 40s are the last generation that trapped. If it isn't passed on to kids I think it'll be gone, to be honest."

OWU Southern Classic

by Becky Wood, OWU President

As President of Outdoor Women Unlimited, I am reminded each year of the significance of our program and its impact on our members and their families. Each year, I see mothers and daughters, sisters, best friends, and new friends learn and discover new outdoor adventures at our Southern Classic. This year as in years past, Outdoor Women Unlimited hosted the 4th Annual Southern Classic at the legendary Southern Sportsmen Lodge in Benton, Alabama. It was another tremendous year of outstanding participation of old faces as well as the great induction of new faces to a program that is growing in leaps and bounds.

Outdoor Women Unlimited's vision is to educate women in outdoor adventure, while encouraging them to further develop their skills and ultimately increase the participation for their entire family in the great outdoors. Since the founding of OWU, our program has taken steps in the direction of our vision and as our focus has grown more intense; our membership continues to flourish with educated and excited members who are eager and willing to lead themselves and their friends and families into great outdoor adventures.

We want to thank our volunteers and supporters of OWU, without each one of these individuals our program would not have the opportunity to make a difference in the lives of



Christy Cooper, OWU member, and Bill Porter, OWU Shotgun Instructor. Bill, Master Class Shooter, instructs Christy in the basic fundamentals in OWU Shotgun I Class.

so many. ACEOA continues to be a strong supporter of our program and this year's Southern Classic was no exception. Thank you to all ACEOA members who volunteered their time and service to make this year's classic fantastic. **These volunteers include, Rusty Morrow, Hasty Hudson, Kirk Smith, Chris Jaworowski, and Jay Connell.** Thank you so much for your belief in our program and working with OWU to challenge our members to Accept No Limits.

The Classic is truly a day our members can test their limits and conquer fears and challenges in one venue. We offer a variety of courses for members to select from during the day. These include shotgun, pistol, air rifle, archery, canoe/kayak, self defense, dutch oven, outdoor art, ATV, photography, sticks to staff, and much more. Each participant selects six classes to take during the daylong event and from these classes she is able to learn the basics in a certain outdoor skill and discover if this is a field she is specifically interested in learning more about. The Southern Classic is the culmination of our entire program. It is this day that we build our entire program for the year from and allow our members to gain more skill and knowledge in individual avenues.

In previous years we have had many mother and daughter teams come through the program but this year we had

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OWU SOUTHERN CLASSIC – *continued*

our first Lil Bit, Brooke Sansom (daughter) and member, Dawn Singleton (mother) participate in the Classic. Lil Bits is a program we created in 2009. It is our membership for girls ages 9-14. These Lil Bits have the opportunity to participate with an adult in the OWU events as well as their own Lil Bit event. Dawn has participated in our events for the past couple of years but this year was a little different, she brought along her daughter, Brooke. What a great experience for mother and daughter and an equally great experience for OWU.

Our program was built on the concept that the tradition and heritage of the outdoors and hunting is a foundation that today's youth are missing. We aspire to reach the youth by reaching their moms, sisters, aunts, and friends and igniting the passion for the outdoors inside of them so that they will spread the fire to the younger generation.

It is through our continued mission and vision that we strive to keep the vitality of our program as well as the understanding of conservation and the legacy of hunting alive. This year we saw our vision spark with Brooke and her mom and we want to continue to stir the embers so that the passion of OWU will spread like wild fire and women



and girls from 9-92 will have the passion and drive to Accept No Limits and learn what great adventure lies just outside their back door.

Thank you to all those who have trudged the road less traveled to create an opportunity for us to lay a foundation that will ignite a passion in an entire new field of hunters, hikers, campers, and outdoor enthusiasts, who will tell our story of tradition and legacy and pass the torch of conservation and preservation to the next generation.



There's NO Shopping in the Outdoors

by Brooke Sansom

When my Mom suggested that we have a mother-daughter day all I could do was roll my eyes and think of a dreaded, long day of shopping.

Instead my mom put a piece of paper in front of me that said Outdoor Women Unlimited—OWU. It had all sorts of fun workshops we could take together. The classes I got excited over were Archery, Field Dog Class and Demo, Sticks to Staff, Outdoor Art, Canoeing/Kayaking and Fishing.

The night before the event I could hardly sleep. This was the first time I was excited about getting up so early on a Saturday morning. The drive to the Southern Sportsman's Lodge in Benton, Ala., was not long, and it gave my mom and me the chance to talk about what our day had in store for us.

When we got to the Lodge it was cold, but inside it was nice and warm. My mom introduced me to Ms. Becky Wood and her daughter Whitney. They were so nice to me and made me feel like I belonged there. I could not believe they were a mother and daughter who loved the outdoors so much that they were helping other mothers and daughters come and learn together.



Hitting the target takes concentration.



You can learn to turn a stick into a walking staff.

My first activity was fishing. I have fished before but I needed help throwing out my line and avoiding the bird's nest in my reel that I sometimes get. Even though it was cold I caught four fish—three bass and one crappie. I got up the nerve from the instructor to hold my first fish by the mouth. Putting my worm on the hook was not for me, but that's what moms are for, right? We had an instructor who would have done it, but I think my mom enjoyed putting the worm on the hook for me.

With hot chocolate in hand, my mom and I headed to the Field Dog class and demo. I fell in love with the dogs. I have three dogs

at home and, believe me, they do not mind as well as those dogs.

The dogs were well trained in picking up birds and stopping on a dime when their master blew his whistle. I got to throw the white dummy out all day and I learned so many commands. I am hoping to teach my dog some of the commands I learned and also, training with a leash. My mom said I will have my work cut out for me.

Before lunch we got to make Sticks to Staff. I wanted to make my dad a walking staff so the instructor helped me pick out a good sturdy stick that I could sand down and decorate with feathers, stones and even a compass for the top. My mom made me an Auburn University staff with orange and blue feathers. I love it.

Since it was a cold day, it was nice to have a hot lunch or as my mom puts it, a good old-fashioned Southern meal with fried chicken, mashed potatoes, rolls and peach cobbler straight from the Dutch Oven Cooking class. Yum!

After lunch I got to put the finishing touches on my stick for my dad and then I kept going back to the Demo Dogs to throw the white dummy again and again. I could not get away from them. I think I have found my new passion.

Archery was another activity I really looked forward to since my mom teaches archery to women, but we have never had the chance to get on the range together. I learned there is a lot of responsibility with shooting a bow. It took balance, strength and patience. I think I am pretty good at it, too. My mom was so proud of me, and we both were having fun.

At the end of the day I was very tired, but it was a good tired. I learned so much and made so many memories that I will never forget with my Mom. I think the best lesson I learned was how much I love being outside and learning new activities. I can't wait until next time.



Beginning archery success.



Fishing has its rewards!



The field dogs would stop when the whistle blew.

Editor's Note: Brooke's mother Dawn Singleton is Buckmasters' Media Coordinator and Insurance Coordinator. She has been teaching adult women archery in the "Becoming an Outdoor Woman Program" for 10 years. You can read more about Outdoor Women Unlimited on their website, www.outdoorwomenunlimited.org.

Red Snapper TAC Up While Season Shortens

by David Rainer, Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources

For the first time in years, the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council voted at its February meeting in Mobile to raise the total allowable catch (TAC) for red snapper. Unfortunately, that will not translate into immediate relief for the beleaguered recreational sector and its charter boat fleet.

In fact, the 2010 red snapper season will be the shortest on record, according to Roy Crabtree, regional administrator of NOAA Fisheries Service's Southeast Region. To keep the recreational sector from going over its quota, which it did last year by more than a million-and-a-half pounds, Crabtree said the season will likely run from 51 to 60 days with a start date of June 1. A final season closing date will not be determined until May, Crabtree said. The TAC was raised from 5 million pounds to 6.945 million pounds with a 51-percent split going to the commercial sector and the remainder to the recreational sector.

"We do not have all of our recreational catch estimates from last year, but from the preliminary estimates, that's about what it would mean," Crabtree said of the shortened season. "The only reason we're able to allow the TAC to start going up is the projection that over-fishing should have ended. I think that's a big accomplishment. It's something the council has been trying to do for many, many years and this is the first time we seemed to have succeeded."

"In theory, the TAC should go up every year. Of course, that is contingent on us not exceeding the quota. We have had some very large overruns the last few years in the recreational sector. We need to correct that problem. If we can stay within the 6.945 million pounds then the council could come back in and increase the TAC next year and it could keep increasing each year. Ultimately, it will be somewhere in the 13- to 14-million pound range, which is higher than anything we've had in a long, long time."

Crabtree said the reason the TAC is going up is the size of the fish is getting bigger. As the stock recovers, the proportion of the stock made up of older fish, which are larger on average, will increase.

"The problem is that as the fishing gets better, more people are able to limit out and more people go fishing," he said. "There are all kinds of complicating factors involved."

Johnny Greene, captain of the charter boat *Intimidator* out of Orange Beach and a member of the Gulf Council, said he's encouraged to finally see the TAC go up after all many years of reductions. He also said it's hard for him to explain the regulatory process to his customers, who experience just how good the snapper fishing is off the Alabama coast.

"It's hard to relay that to people in a manner that people can understand," Greene said. "It seems to a lot of people that common sense is not involved. Obviously, the shorter season doesn't sit well at all. It's one

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PHOTO BY DAVID RAINER



With the recovery of the red snapper population in the Gulf of Mexico, the size of the average fish has increased from 3.5 to 5 pounds – a "double-edged sword" for anglers and administrators.



RED SNAPPER TAC UP WHILE SEASON SHORTENS – *continued*

of those things that everybody is seeing tremendous fish stocks out there. The fishery is coming back, but it's hard for people to understand that it's a rebuilding thing. The size of the fish is a concern, because the larger the fish the larger the poundage and the shorter the season. That's something we're really going to have to look at."

Gulf Council Chairman Bob Shipp, head of Marine Sciences at the University of South Alabama, echoed Greene's concerns about using weight as a determining factor for the health of fish stocks.

"This issue of the size of individual fish has pretty much wiped out the (TAC) gains," Shipp said. "I think the direction we want to go is to change the way we evaluate the quota and put it in terms of numbers of fish rather than weight. Weight is simply a proxy anyway for fishing pressure. A much better way of measuring fishing pressure is the percentage of fish you catch. That would eliminate this problem of the fish getting larger. I'm beginning to see a push in that direction. Eventually, that would be a big plus."

"I think for the 2011 fishing season, there are several things on the horizon that could help. One of them is to lower the minimum size from 16 to 13 inches. First of all, that's what the commercial minimum size is. There's always been conflict about the difference in minimum sizes. Plus, you will reduce the number of discards (undersized fish returned to the water). Thirdly, you would reduce the size of the fish if we're still wedded to this weight parameter. If you go to a 13-inch size limit, you're going to insert a few smaller fish. Now it's true there might be some high-grading. But if you reduce the average to 4.5-pounds, it would increase the season by two weeks."

A move away from the survey method of determining

fish stocks would also increase the reliability of the data collected, according to Shipp.

"I see in the National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries Service) a greater willingness to move toward the fishery independent data source," he said. "I think they're finally beginning to believe what the fishermen have been telling them – there are a lot more fish out there, especially off the west coast of Florida. Incorporating this additional data would make the (computer) models far more accurate and reduce the uncertainty."

Capt. Ben Fairey, president of the Orange Beach Fishing Association, said the charter industry desperately needs more time on the water.

"I've been fishing for 37 years and the red snapper fishing is better than I've ever seen it," Fairey said. "The average size keeps going up so our season is going to be shorter. We caught about the same number of fish, about 700,000 individuals, in 2008 as we did in 2009. But we went over by almost 2 million pounds. It's like a double-edged sword. It's great that the fishery has rebounded, but the fish are getting so big. That's something the council is going to have to address. One of the things I want is the option of a 13-inch minimum explored. One school of thought is that if we drop it to 13 inches, which is was at one time, your discard mortality will drop. Also, the dolphin interaction will slow up."

"Between the economy and the regulations, it's a tough, tough time for the charter industry. We need longer seasons."

Visit www.outdooralabama.com to learn more about the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources or to read previous columns by David Rainer.