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texas parks & wildlife news

TEXAS PARKS AND WILDLIFE DEPARTMENT • AUSTIN, TEXAS 78744

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Government Documents

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TURKEY HUNT APPLICATIONS
STILL BEING ACCEPTED

AUSTIN -- The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department reminds hunters in the Texas Panhandle area that public spring turkey gobbler hunts will be held on two wildlife management areas during April.

So far few applications have been received for hunts on the Matador Wildlife Management Area near Paducah and the Gene Howe W.M.A. near Canadian. Hunts also are planned for the Kerr W.M.A. near Ingram and the Engeling W.M.A. near Palestine.

Application forms may be obtained by writing the department headquarters, 4200 Smith School Road, Austin, TX 78744 or by calling toll-free 1-800-252-9327. Application deadline is 5 p.m. March 10. A public drawing will be held in Austin at 10 a.m. March 15 to select 213 permits.

Public hunts held on management areas do not necessarily indicate high game populations, but rather are part of the department's ongoing management programs.

The general spring turkey season, to be offered in 62 counties this year, is April 12-27. The bag limit is one gobbler per hunter.

FISHERMEN AWAIT
WHITE BASS 'RUN'

AUSTIN -- The annual white bass guessing game is underway.

When winter's chill abates and spring draws near, Texas fishermen start debating the arrival time of the white bass "run."

The whites usually begin to feel the spawning urge in late February or early March and swim upstream, concentrating in sometimes awesome numbers below dams and in lake tributaries.

Timing is all-important for the white bass fisherman, since peak concentrations may appear suddenly and be over in a week or two.

Texas Parks and Wildlife Department biologists point out that there actually are two white bass runs. The first is when the small males make their early-spring appearance at the spawning grounds. The true run happens about a month later when egg-laden females swim upstream to a watery rendezvous with the males.

Rainfall and warm weather are key elements in this movement, as increased water flows and warm temperatures can send the females upstream to form large concentrations below dams and in river headwaters. Luckily for the angler, white bass continue to feed voraciously during the spawning run.

Late winter and spring droughts can extend the spawning run over a longer period, but the larger females prized by fishermen may make only a token appearance, according to Bob Bounds, inland fisheries management coordinator.

"If we don't get some significant rain on the watersheds in the next month or so there may not be a major white bass run," Bounds said. "Fishing action under these conditions is usually pretty slow except for an occasional brief flurry."

However, anglers who want to get in on the available action have a large number of traditional white bass hotspots from which to choose.

On the Highland Lakes chain of reservoirs in Central Texas, several areas stand out. One of them is the Colorado River above Lake Buchanan near Bend. Several privately owned fishing camps offer access to the river, both for boat and bank fishing.

Farther down the Colorado River, the headwaters of Lake LBJ just below the Inks Lake dam is a good area, as is the Llano River from its confluence with Lake LBJ upstream to just above Kingsland. The tailrace below Lake LBJ dam also is popular for whites.

Lake Travis offers several potential white bass areas. Just below the Lake Marble Falls dam is fairly consistent for bank fishing although boat launching facilities

are lacking. The "narrows" area of upper Lake Travis often is productive for large whites, and another spring hotspot is the Pedernales River. Pedernales fishing is mainly via boat or access from private fishing camps several miles upstream from the lake.

Farther north, the Brazos River system offers a number of hotspots. Two of these are the tailrace below the Lake Granbury dam and above Lake Whitney in the Kimble Bend area. The three forks of the Bosque River which form the headwaters of Lake Waco also offer good fishing. The main access points are the South Bosque at the Highway 84 bridge, the Middle Bosque on U.S. Army Corps of Engineers land just north of the Highway 84 bridge and the North Bosque at the Old China Springs low water crossing.

The Trinity River system also has numerous areas for the white bass buff. In fact, the Trinity above Lake Livingston may be the hottest area in the state for spring whites -- especially those in the two to three pound class.

The Trinity lock and dam at Highway 7 between Crockett and Centerville is a fine bank fishing area, especially when the river is at normal or slightly higher than normal flows.

Also good is the Trinity below Lake Livingston dam where an access fee is charged for bank fishing.

Near Brenham is Lake Somerville, where the Yegua Creek area below the dam is good white bass fishing when water is being released in the spring. There are no access fees and no facilities. Fishing also is good on Yegua Creek above Lake Somerville at the Erwin Bridge crossing. Access there is by highway right-of-way, and there are no facilities.

Farther east, B.A. Steinhagen (Dam B) Lake near Jasper has several areas for whites, including the two small bridges on Highway 190, where bank fishing is available. Nearby Martin Dies, Jr. State Park has two lighted fishing piers which offer good early morning fishing. The tailrace area below the dam also is productive in the spring.

In the Marshall-Longview area of East Texas, the tailrace area below the Lake O' the Pines dam is one of the better-developed fishing spots in the region. Also, white bass fishing is good in the upper end of Caddo Lake at the Highway 43 bridge crossing. Farther north, the tailrace of Lake Wright Patman dam near Texarkana is a good white bass area.

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In the Dallas-Fort Worth area, Lake Lavon offers bank fishing for whites at the power plant discharge area. Good bank fishing access also is available at Lake Lewisville in the Stewart Creek cut located a half-mile southeast of the old Lake Dallas dam.

In West and South Texas some of the better spots are the South Concho River and Spring Creek just above Twin Buttes Reservoir near San Angelo; San Ygnacio Falls on the Rio Grande above Falcon Reservoir; the Bandera Falls area of the Medina River above Lake Medina near San Antonio; and the Nueces River above Lake Corpus Christi to George West (bank access at county road crossings).

During a spring run, white bass usually are not difficult to catch. Most anglers use either minnows (commercial or seined) or small yellow or white jigs. Whites also will hit small spoons, spinners and shad-colored crankbaits at times.

White bass are a natural for the ultralight tackle enthusiast, as the fish seem to prefer small lures and usually are not too large to handle with four-or six-pound-test line.

JC 2/13/80

SHARK RESOURCE STILL UNDERUTILIZED

AUSTIN -- For most western cultures, sharks are not a popular protein source, but Texas Parks and Wildlife Department surveys in the Gulf of Mexico indicate a considerable shark resource is available.

Bottom longline sampling during December yielded good catches of Atlantic sharpnose sharks which averaged approximately three feet long and weighed about 10 pounds.

Biologists Terry J. Cody and Billy Fuls reported catching sharks at 15 to 27 fathoms, with catch rates from 25 to 46 fish per 100 hooks. The line yielded 272 to 435 pounds of fish per hour.

Shark meat is not readily available on the market, but when it can be obtained it is said to be highly palatable. For a variety of shark recipes, write Annette Reddell, Texas A&M University Marine Advisory Service, 442 Kleberg Center, College Station, TX 77843.

JC 2/13/80

LAKE WELSH OVERLOOKED AS BASS HOTSPOT

AUSTIN -- With a new state record largemouth bass and a continuing list of 10-plus-pound bass to its credit, Lake Monticello near Mount Pleasant has been hogging the headlines in recent times.

However, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department biologists point out that there is another excellent fishing lake just down the road from Monticello.

Lake Welsh, like Monticello, is a powerplant-heated reservoir and home for a rapidly growing population of Florida largemouth bass stocked there by the department.

Although probably not yet capable of producing a monster like the 14-pound, 1 1/2-ounce record fish caught two weeks ago at Monticello by Jim Kimbell of Pittsburg, biologists estimate that Lake Welsh probably has at least some bass in the 10-pound-plus category.

Lake Welsh is in Titus County just east of Pittsburg on State Highway 11, less than 30 miles from the sometimes-crowded Lake Monticello.

The lake definitely could stand more pressure from bass anglers, said Alan Forshage, P&WD regional fisheries director of Tyler. "Our 1979 survey indicated an excellent bass population in all size groups up to 19 inches," he said.

Southwestern Electric Power Company improved their facilities in 1979 for the convenience of anglers. A new light was installed at the boat ramp for night fishermen, and the parking lot was expanded to accommodate more vehicles.

Fishermen should follow the main road off of Highway 11 marked "Lake Welsh" and go past the entrance gates of SWEPCO power plant for about one mile. Then take the first blacktop road to the right and follow the signs marked Swauano Grocery and Marina.

TG 2/13/80

SAN JOSE HISTORIC SITE SUMMER HOURS ANNOUNCED

AUSTIN -- Effective June 1, 1980, Mission San Jose State and National Historic Site will be open one hour later each day for its summer schedule. The summer hours will be 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. Currently the hours are 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

The site, located at 6539 San Jose Drive in San Antonio, is open to the public daily throughout the year. Admission is 50 cents for adults and 25 cents for children ages six to 12. For further information contact the park at (512) 922-2731.

JC 2/13/80

1979 HUNTING SEASON
SAFEST IN 15 YEARS

LUBBOCK -- The 1979 hunting season was the safest for Texas hunters since 1965, according to the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department.

Only 50 recorded hunting accidents were reported through the Uniform Hunter Casualty Reports filed by game wardens.

Of these accidents, nine were fatal. Shotguns lead the list of firearms involved in the accidents, with rifles a close second.

Eighty persons were involved in the accidents; 26 were 16 years of age or younger.

Sixteen of the accidents were classified as "hunter judgment" caused. In other words, the victims either moved into the line of fire, were hit when another shooter swung on game, were hit while out of sight of the shooter or were mistaken for game.

Among shooters hunting game animals and birds, deer hunting accounted for 12 accidents, quail and dove hunting accounted for eight accidents each.

Shooters in four of the accidents were reported to be graduates of formal hunter safety training courses. Two were graduates of the Texas Volunteer Hunter Safety Training program.

Even with the reduced number of hunting accidents reported for 1979, the P&WD hopes 1980 will be even safer for sportsmen enjoying the Texas outdoors.

JDP 2/13/80

FEBRUARY, MARCH BEST
FOR LARGE BLACK DRUM

AUSTIN -- February and March are the prime months to catch large black drum along the Texas Gulf Coast, according to Texas Parks and Wildlife Department biologists.

Black drum may be less exciting to catch than their relative the red drum (redfish), but black drum are larger, averaging 30 to 40 pounds.

Biologist Arthur L. Crowe of Seadrift said the big drum tend to congregate in deep water around channels and near jetties in the early spring prior to spawning.

The state record black drum weighed 78 pounds and was caught from Sabine Lake in 1964.

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Black drum, redfish and spotted seatrout (speckled trout) all are members of the croaker family and all produce croaking or drumming sounds with specialized air bladders. However, black drum are the champion drummers.

Being primarily bottom feeders, black drum are most often caught by anglers fishing on the bottom with crabs or shrimp. Patience is required, because the drum often hold the bait in their mouth briefly before taking it, Crowe said.

Black drum will not jump or break the surface when hooked, but fight with short, powerful surges. Crowe said strong tackle and a reel with an effective drag mechanism are essential.

JC 2/13/80

RABBIT HUNTING SOLVES
POST-SEASON BLUES

AUSTIN -- The hunting seasons are drawing to a close across Texas, but that's no reason to stow the shotgun or .22 rifle until next fall.

Cottontail rabbits can provide some real sport on drab late-winter days after the fall hunting seasons are just memory.

Cottontails or their larger swamp rabbit relatives are found almost anywhere there is a brushy draw or brier patch. And there are no closed seasons, bag limits or other restrictions on hunting the prolific mammals.

As with quail, the annual population of rabbits is almost entirely dependent on the weather and resulting range conditions. Rabbit populations are subject to periodic "boom or bust" cycles which occur whether hunted or not.

There are a number of hunting methods for rabbits, with varying degrees of challenge to the hunter. Probably the most difficult is stalking them with a .22 rifle or pistol. The well-concealed rabbits are extremely difficult to see, and once flushed, a bounding rabbit is more than a challenge to most shooters.

Even the use of shotguns is no guarantee of success, as cottontails usually can make it to heavy cover in a few rapid hops.

Cottontails would rather hide than run, so the hunter often must kick his way through the brambles to dislodge B'r'er Rabbit from hiding.

Dogs are sometimes used to flush the animals, and some hunters train beagle or basset hounds to trail them by scent. Rabbits confine their range to a small area, so hunters with hounds can pick a "stand" and wait for the dogs to pursue the rabbit back to a point near where it was flushed.

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Once a brace of rabbits is in the bag, there are a number of ways they can be prepared for the table. The most common recipes are for fried, barbecued, or various kinds of stewed rabbit.

However, David Archer, a Texas Parks and Wildlife Department employee who specializes in wild game cooking, offers the following oriental-style rabbit recipe for a change of pace.

GENERAL DAVE'S SZECHUAN RABBIT

Ingredients: Meat of one or two cottontail rabbits boned and cut into thin strips; cooking oil; six to eight medium mushrooms, sliced; 1/4 tsp. crushed red pepper; soy sauce; one-half cup fresh snow peas or fresh green beans cut in two-inch pieces; ginger root sliced in one to three very thin pieces; one square inch of orange peel chopped fine; one-fourth cup shredded cabbage; two medium cloves of garlic diced; two tablespoons finely chopped onion (optional); salt to taste.

In a small pan, saute garlic, hot pepper and ginger in 1/6 cup of oil for about five minutes. Add rabbit pieces and saute over medium heat until almost cooked. Add one tablespoon soy sauce, add enough water to cover meat and cover pan. Simmer for 35 minutes on low heat. Uncover and allow to simmer until the liquid is cooked down to the level of the meat. While cooking the rabbit, prepare vegetables. When the liquid has been reduced, heat one-fourth cup of oil in a wok (or large shallow pan). Add remaining ingredients and stir fry for one or two minutes. Add rabbit and remaining liquid to vegetables, cook for one more minute. Serve over rice.

Fresh vegetables from your garden such as zucchini squash, snap peas or spinach are excellent to use. They may be added to, or substituted for, cabbage in the recipe.

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