

Hunters urged to beat rush, buy licenses early

New hunting and fishing licenses for 2007-08 will be available beginning Wednesday, Aug. 15, and the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department is encouraging hunters to buy early and avoid the rush heading into the Sept. 1 dove season opener.

"If you wait until the Friday before the dove season opener, you're probably going to be standing in line to buy a license," said Tom Newton with TPWD's licensing section. "Last year, we sold nearly 350,000 licenses during the four-day period around the opening weekend of dove season. It takes an average of five minutes to process a license sale transaction, so it's likely there will be delays if you wait 'til the last minute."

Newton said a little planning could save hunters a lot of time in the checkout line. "It's like planning your morning commute; you can sit in bumper-to-bumper traffic or you can leave early and breeze through. We average less than 20,000 license transactions a day during the two weeks prior to the dove season opener and five or six times that number on the days around opening weekend."

Sportsmen are reminded all current annual hunting and fishing licenses (except for the year-to-date fishing license) expire Aug. 31.

Texas issues 3.2 million hunting and fishing licenses annually through 28 TPWD field offices, more than 100 state parks and at over 1,400 retailers across Texas.

A last-minute license purchase rush is probably inevitable in some areas of the state, TPWD officials say; particularly along the I-35 corridor where many dove hunters descend. Fortunately, there are other license buying avenues available.

"Hunters who need to purchase a license at the last minute or those who don't want to stand in line have a couple of options," said Newton. "They can also purchase licenses online through the TPWD web site (<http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/>) or by calling (800) 895-4248. There is a \$5 convenience fee for either option and a major credit card is required."

License sales call center hours are 9 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Monday — Friday. The online transaction system is available 24/7.

"We sold about 13,000 licenses online and by phone during the peak sales weekend last year," Newton said. "We'd like to steer more of the traffic to the call center and Internet during the peak volume periods."

A license confirmation number is issued at the time of purchase for online and phone orders, and the physical license is mailed separately.

Confirmation numbers will verify that a license has been purchased, which is sufficient for dove hunting, but will not allow hunters to take fish or wildlife that requires a tag.

"Some people are using the convenience options to purchase licenses for everyone in their family or hunting group," Newton said. "It can help ensure that everybody who shows up to hunt, especially those coming in from out of state or kids coming in from college, already have a hunting license waiting for them. You can buy a license for someone else, even at the retail counter, but to avoid delays please be sure you have all their personal information."

In addition to a hunting license, all wing shooters will need to purchase a game bird stamp. To hunt doves or teal in September, a Migratory Game Bird Stamp (\$7) is required. Duck hunters also need to purchase a Federal Duck Stamp and receive HIP (Harvest Information Program) certification. HIP certification will be printed on the license at the time of sale only after the purchaser answers a few brief migratory bird questions. Lifetime license holders must also be HIP-certified and purchase the Federal Duck Stamp to hunt migratory birds. All other state stamp endorsements are included with a lifetime license.

"Remember, it's your responsibility to make sure you are properly licensed, so be sure to check your license before you leave the sales counter," Newton said. "We do get a fair number of requests for re-issuance of licenses because the hunter forgot to get HIP certified."

There are other mandatory endorsements to consider at the time of purchase, too.

An Upland Game Bird Stamp (\$7) is required to hunt all non-migratory game birds, including turkey, quail, pheasant, chachalaca and lesser prairie chicken.

Of course, anyone who purchases the Super Combo license package, the best bang for the buck, automatically gets these needed stamps.

Hunter Education Certification is also required of any hunter born on or after Sept. 2, 1971 and who is at least 17 years old.

For hunters who are unable to work in a hunter education class before hunting season for whatever reason, TPWD does offer a deferral option.

The deferral option allows people 17 years of age or older a one-time only extension to complete the state's hunter education requirements.

The individual must first purchase a hunting license and then may purchase the deferral option.

Hunters using the deferral must be accompanied by someone 17 years old or older who is also licensed to hunt in Texas.

The accompanying individual must have completed hunter education or be exempt from the requirements (born before Sept. 2, 1971). The extension is good for one license year, by which time the person with the deferred option needs to complete a hunter education course.

This option is not available to those who have ever received a conviction or deferred adjudication for lack of hunter education certification. They still must take the course before going afield.

There are a few changes in license requirements this year that license buyers should be aware of; probably the most significant change involves streamlining what had become a complex and somewhat confusing set of temporary fishing licenses created originally to provide additional licensing options for a variety of situations. Variations of the resident and non-resident temporary fishing options known as "Day-Plus Fishing Packages" have been consolidated into "One-Day Fishing Licenses" at a cost of \$10 for residents and \$15 for non-residents.

Anglers may purchase as many one-day licenses as they wish.

No additional freshwater or saltwater stamp endorsements are required with the one-day licenses and one Bonus Red Drum Tag will be available for free with the purchase of the first one-day license.

There are now a "Senior Resident Hunting License" and a "Youth Hunting License," replacing what had been the Special Resident Hunting License. The fee remains at \$6 for these licenses. Both resident and non-resident youth under 17 qualify for the new Youth Hunting License.

Along those same lines, senior anglers have several options under the "Senior Resident Fishing License Packages," which allows resident senior citizens to fish in freshwater for \$11, saltwater for \$16 or any Texas public waters for \$21. The "Special Resident Fishing License" will be available only to individuals who are legally blind and will cost \$6.

Freshwater stamp and saltwater stamp requirements are waived.

Season tickets on sale Friday

Jasper football season tickets not picked up by the original owners will go on public sale on a first come-first serve basis on Friday, July 27 from 9 a.m. to noon in the JISD Athletic Department office, 136 South Main Street.

The price for a season ticket set of five (5) home games is \$17.50/set.

For more information, contact the JISD Athletic Department at 382-1354.

Soccer league registration still underway

The Pineywoods Youth Soccer League, Inc will hold late registration for the Fall 2007 soccer league through Aug. 1 at Stamps Commercial Press, 112 E. Lamar in downtown Jasper.

The cost for each player is \$60 and a \$5 discount for each additional player per family, which includes a uniform and insurance. Full and partial scholarships are available.

Spanish and English registration forms are available and all registrants should have a copy of birth certificate available at registration.

There will also be a camp for beginning players only on Thursday and Friday, Aug. 9-10 at the soccer fields from 6-7:30 p.m. and Saturday, Aug. 11 at 10 a.m. for all players for tryouts.

Games dates are set for Saturdays, Sept. 9, 15, 22, 29, Oct. 6, 13, 20 and an all-day tournament on Oct. 27. Practices are usually held one or two days a week starting the week of Aug. 27.

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Public hunt drawings offer affording hunting

With fall hunting seasons shaping up to be among the best in recent memory, according to state wildlife biologists, now is the time to begin making preparations. The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department will be conducting special drawings for hunts and applications for these quality, affordable hunting experiences are available now.

During the upcoming hunting seasons, more than 5,000 hunters will be selected through random computer drawings allowing access to some of the state's high-quality managed wildlife habitat. Wildlife management areas, state parks and leased private property will be available for these quality supervised hunts for white-tailed deer, mule deer, pronghorn, javelina, alligator, exotics, feral hog and spring turkey.

Through an application process, hunters can select from among 31 different hunt categories and choose a preferred hunt date and location from 69 hunt areas stretching across the state. There's even a provision for

hunting buddies to apply as a group — in some cases up to four hunters can apply together on one application.

"Hunters interested in applying for drawn hunts this season should pay close attention to the application deadlines which have changed for some hunt categories," said Kelly Edmiston Program Specialist with TPWD's public hunting program. "Three new hunt categories have also been added for this year: private lands pronghorn, archery mule deer and gun mule deer."

Eight free youth-only hunt categories are available to hunters who are between the ages of 8-16 at the time of application. All hunt positions are randomly selected in a computer drawing from all correctly completed entries received by the specified deadline.

In addition to exceptional hunting opportunities for big game, such as white-tailed deer and mule deer, TPWD's special drawing hunts will offer some

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