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"The main cause of fawn mortality, or death of fawns, is predation from animals whether it be a coyote or bobcat or red fox. It's not just counting livestock damage, but damage to wildlife as well."

ECONOMIC ISSUES

Predator damage isn't limited to livestock and wildlife, but extends into local economies.

"The main industry we have in Mills County is agriculture related," Sutherland said. "Farming and ranching along with the use of recreational wildlife in terms of hunting and fishing. Why we have to keep this program going is that it's not only just our heritage and our way of life, but it's also a way of bringing in tax dollars and dollars that can be used to help other organizations in the community."

By keeping the predator population under control, local economies flourish. Farmers, ranchers, and those involved with wildlife recreation can make a profit on their animals and in turn are able to give back to the community.

"When it comes time to help out our volunteer fire departments within the county, we are able to donate individually to their fundraisers," Sutherland said. "It allows us as producers to help with the Youth Fair Association, donate to the Buyers Club, or buy premiums to be able to help the youth in Mills County that way. It allows us to be able to donate to something like the WWII memorial project and being able to give back to the community and other organizations that need financial help because having these predators under control allows us to be profitable in our line of work as farmers and ranchers."

If the predator population were to ever get out of control, the economy suffers.

"We have two trappers in this

county," Sutherland said. "If we were to lose one, the one remaining would be overwhelmed to the point where he could not be effective. We have to keep that balance between predators and feral hogs. If we let that get out of control, there will be people that won't be able to raise sheep and goats and people that will have trouble farming due to the increase in feral hogs and other predators - that takes tax dollars and money out of our local economy. Eventually, we would be one of those one buck counties that have very low deer population and they do not have that big increase of money coming into the county which is what we have every year due to deer season and wildlife recreation."

Mildred Peters, owner of the Service Feed Mill in Priddy and member since the association was founded, is a prime example of someone who has benefited from the association. "It's helped me by catching coyotes and putting out snares and traps to catch them so I don't have 13 of my lambs dead," Peters said. "I'm able to pay into the association and donate feed through the Service Feed Mill in Priddy to be sold so that they can get more money together to pay our two trappers. I don't know how we could ever do without them."

Mills County is not just known for prime hunting and livestock land, but also for the friendly inhabitants and supportive community.

"We have such a great and supportive community," Sutherland said. "It's amazing how they come together and work hard to get a job done and help preserve our way of life and our heritage here in Mills County."

As the weather cools and hunting season begins, remember the Predator Association and the way they contribute to make hunting season enjoyable and plentiful.



Dove Do's & Don'ts

By Steven Bridges

It is still too hot to get excited about much during the first part of September. Still, many hunters visit our county to set up deer stands and feeders and set up deer camp. Most bring their shotgun along just in case the doves are "in".

Mills County usually relies on a cool Norther to blow doves in from the North for good shooting. I have noticed more and more resident doves in my very informal, pre-season dove scouting. Both white-wings and mourning doves seem to be on the rise in our area. Great news for area hunters. Also, good news for area merchants, who rely on hunters to leave a little of their money in Mills County.

Part of dove hunting's popularity stems from the timing of the sea-

son, which marks the end of a long, hot summer and the beginning of the fall hunting season. Many deer hunters open their camps and begin filling feeders on Labor Day weekend, and a dove hunt adds interest and some tasty eating.

Food sources and water concentrate doves, and TPWD biologists recommend keying on harvested grain fields and natural food sources such as sunflowers and croton.

Flight paths between roosting areas and food and water sources produce the best shooting.

Hill Country counties such as Mills, Hamilton and Lampasas usually furnish good hunting at the beginning of the season for local birds. The hunting heats up later in the season as new birds are pushed down from the north each fall.



Dove Hunting Do's & Don'ts

These are a few mistakes dove hunters make in the field according to Mills County Game Warden Vance Flowers...

No dove hunting from a vehicle. ATVs, UTVs, golf carts and pick-ups count. Don't even sit on the tail gate with the vehicle not moving.

Do not bait doves. Don't dove hunt over a corn feeder, put out food or even rock salt. It is all illegal.

Do plug your shotgun.

Do adhere to the dove bag limit and shooting times.

Remember all birds except Rock Doves (Feral Pigeons), Starlings, English Sparrows, Grackles, Red-Winged Blackbirds, Cowbirds and Crows are protected under state law. Fines for shooting protected birds can be \$25-\$500 per bird. Check local, state and federal laws for additional information.