

**“We had a dry winter through most of the state...”**

# How does the season look?

BREYANA SEGURA

**A**s the ongoing drought conditions have dried out the land and vegetation across South Texas, hunters this year can expect a moderate hunting season this Fall.

In a direct contrast to last summer, drier conditions began in the fall of 2021 and have yet to cease.

Beginning in late spring, the southern part of the state saw nearly 20 consecutive days of temperatures that topped 100 degrees. Those temperatures coupled with lack of rainfall limited spring production of important food sources like



forbs and woody shrubs for deer.

The significant lack of rainfall created exceptionally dry land, causing many landowners to drop their wells in order to continue to have a water

supply. Therefore, many landowners opted to plant smaller crops that attract wildlife to cut down on irrigation.

According to Alan Cain, whitetail deer program leader for Texas Parks and

Wildlife (TPWD), woody plants are critical in times like these because they are deep-rooted plants and often the sole abundant supply of green groceries for deer.

Those plants are showing signs of stress directly related to the drought, he said. In some cases, the plants will defoliate, providing a lesser nutritional level that bucks need to maximize their antler growth or that female deer need to keep up their body reserves to be able to nurse the fawns and help them survive the fall.

“Mesquites appear to be on track to produce an

*(Continued next page)*

## Texas bird hunting season outlook:

# Drought pushes birds to watering holes

**T**exans are used to scorching summers, but this year’s record highs across much of the state have left many dove hunters wondering about the upcoming season opener.

“Unless conditions change drastically over the next few weeks, hunting near water will be key for opening day this year,” said Owen Fitzsimmons, TPWD Dove Program Leader. “Hunters will likely see larger concentrations of birds at watering holes and food sources than they have in the past due to limited resources.

“Agriculture production has been hit hard by drought so birds may be more reliant on native foods this September. Look for stands of common sunflower, croton, and other

native annual forbs and grasses.”

Doves are well-adapted to dry conditions, particularly white-winged doves, which are a sub-tropical species.

“Our spring surveys indicated a decrease in breeding abundance, which is a carry-over from poor hatch-year production

last year,” added Fitzsimmons. “However, doves kick reproduction into high gear in dry years like this, and we’re seeing a lot of young birds this summer, based on our banding efforts.”

TPWD officials remind hunters to prepare for the

extreme heat and make sure they are packing all the essentials for a day in the field. They should bring plenty of water to stay hydrated and take measures to stay cool in a shaded area. The same is true for canine hunting partners.

“If this extreme heat persists, think twice about bringing your dog out in the early season,” said Fitzsimmons. “Temperatures this high can be dangerous for dogs, particularly when they’re excited and running hard after birds.

“If you do bring them, try to limit the hunts to early mornings or late evenings.”

The regular dove season in the North Zone runs Sept. 1-Nov. 13 and resumes Dec. 17-Jan. 1, 2023.

The regular season in the Central Zone is Sept. 1-Oct. 30, then resumes Dec. 17-Jan. 15, 2023.

The regular season in the South Zone is Sept. 14-Oct. 30 and Dec. 17-Jan. 22, 2023.

For the second straight year, there will be six Special White-Winged Dove Days. The Special White-Winged Dove Days will be Sept. 2-4 and 9-11.

During the regular season in the South Zone, the aggregate bag limit is 15 with no more than two white-tipped doves.

During the Special White-winged Dove Days in the South Zone, hunting is allowed only

### 2022-23 DOVE SEASON CALENDAR

North Zone: Sep. 1 - Nov. 13 & Dec. 17 - Jan. 1  
Central Zone: Sep. 1 - Oct. 30 & Dec. 17 - Jan. 15  
South Zone: Sep. 14 - Oct. 30 & Dec. 17 - Jan. 22

(See DROUGHT, Page 19)