

TOWA

NOTE NEW
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Texas Outdoor Writers Association
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The Official Publication of the **Texas Outdoor Writers Association**

TOWA PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Modernizing TOWA Presents Challenges, Opportunities

TOWA Needs Your Involvement, Expertise to 'Be Dynamic or Die'

David J. Sikes, President

I'm a big fan of tradition. But when tradition runs afoul of reason I choose the latter.

This was the basis of the board's decision to hire a professional executive director. And it is this mindset that may result in other sensible changes in TOWA during the coming months and years.

We must be dynamic or die.

One of those changes involves the newsletter. Susan Ebert has performed admirably as compiler, editor and designer of the TOWA newsletter since taking over those responsibilities several years ago.

But Susan has decided to step down; this October newsletter is her final offering, after giving the board 30 days notice that demands on her time would prevent her from continuing to compile, edit, layout and distribute the monthly newsletter.

To some, this may represent a void. To others it may represent an opportunity.

The monthly newsletter is not only how we distribute member news, but how we publicize our supporting members to our membership. We hope to streamline this process, and the board will gladly entertain proposals from members in order to achieve this.

TOWA Executive Director Burney Brown has begun sending out e-blasts to communicate with and inform members. This could replace the newsletter, but not necessarily: Someone will still need to compile and edit the information going out to our membership.

If we receive an outcry to return to a traditional newsletter, delivered in a PDF format, then we may take that route. You decide. But keep in mind that layout and design for a PDF formatted newsletter costs money; money we could save by doing an electronic newsletter.

Speaking of money, the conference is about five months away. Along with dues, this annual event is a major revenue source through live and silent auctions. And next to operating costs, the conference

also is a major expense.

Traditionally, meal sponsorships and such have offset some conference costs not covered by fees. This tradition is growing, thanks mostly to TJ Greaney's recruiting efforts. You should be hearing more good news soon on this front. Please give TJ some feedback on this at tj@kidsoutdoorzone.com.

Burney has promised to do his part to garner additional sponsorships. Contact him at towa@towa.org.

I'm going to ask you, the members, again to contribute to this effort by donating an auction item or two. Sam Caldwell has traditionally led this effort by offering artwork.

But nearly everyone has something to give.

We still need someone or several members to feed the website. The content must be fresh, with a mix of member news, useful information, stories we've written, photos we want to show, etc. We've hired a new website designer, in part, with money donated by Ducks Unlimited. And now we need to provide a reason for folks to log on again and again.

If this is not your expertise, then please consider running for TOWA office. Jonette Childs, Peggy York and John Jefferson make up the nominating committee. We have openings for president, president-elect, treasurer and two board seats. Please contact one of the committee members to throw your hat into the ring or to suggest a worthy and willing candidate.

I'd also like to get more involvement from members in the planning of the conference. This is your conference. TJ and I have tried to shake it up a bit by bringing in some nontraditional presenters. We need more of the same. Our goal is to mix up the agenda with humor, entertainment, professional development and education. Please help. Your suggestions are welcome at tj@kidsoutdoorzone.com.

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TOWA HISTORIAN

John Thompson

TOWA News is published monthly by the Texas Outdoor Writers Association. Contributors are urged to submit material by the 15th of each month to TOWA@towa.org.

For advertising information, contact Burney Brown, TOWA Executive Director, at (512) 358-8000. TOWA News is emailed to members and mailed first class, if requested, from Austin, Texas.

TOWA was formed in 1958 as a professional/social organization for those who communicate about hunting, fishing and other outdoor pursuits, as well as those in business and industry connected with the outdoors.

TOWA Mailing Address: Texas Outdoor Writers Association, P.O. Box 151293, Austin, TX 78715-1293

SUPPORTING MEMBER NEWS



HOBIE CAT MIRAGE SPORT PLAYS TO ALL AUDIENCES

OCEANSIDE, CALIF., SEPTEMBER 3, 2013 — There is the old adage that “you can’t be everything to everyone,” but the new Hobie Mirage Sport kayak comes as close as possible to a boat that really does work for all audiences.

Those looking for a touring boat to explore the islands in the middle of the lake or along the coastal shoreline will appreciate its ease of handling and stable hull. Two built-in rod holders and the Lowrance® Ready System for ease in installing electronics will make anglers smile. They will also appreciate the shape of the boat that prevents water slap, which disturbs fish. Sailors, both experienced and beginners alike, will enjoy the diversity offered by the optional sail kit. All of these users, in addition to birdwatchers and photographers, will quickly realize the advantage of Hobie’s iconic and efficient MirageDrive® pedal propulsion system that keep hands virtually free to concentrate on various tasks at hand like eating, drinking, fishing, taking photos or holding binoculars. Yes, in the case of the Hobie Mirage Sport, it IS possible to do it all.

The lightweight, rotomolded polyethylene hull encourages easy tracking and beaching. Its movable seat is a one size fits most. Hobie’s Twist and Stow rudder is there when needed, gone when it is not. The retractable rudder system is engaged and disengaged with a simple pull of the T-shaped control handles. An adjustable high back padded seat with an inflatable lumbar support will provide hours of comfort. The Twist and Seal hatches and the rear cargo area with Bungee tie downs provide ample storage for a day of fun. Utility trays, map pockets and drink holders complete the package.

Since 1950, Hobie has been in the business of shaping a unique lifestyle based around fun, water, and quality products. From their headquarters in Oceanside, California, Hobie Cat Company manufactures, distributes, and markets an impressive collection of eco-sensitive watercraft worldwide. These include an ever-expanding line of recreation and racing sailboats, pedal-driven and paddle sit-on-top recreation and fishing kayaks, inflatable kayaks, fishing boats and stand-up paddleboards plus a complementary array of parts and accessories.



The TOWA Newsletter is proudly sponsored by
Gulf States Toyota. For information, go to www.buyatoyota.com.



TOWA members Sam Caldwell, Karen Loke, Shannon Tompkins and Shane Townsend Garner Honors at OWAA Conference

The Outdoor Writers Association of America announced the winners of the 2013 Excellence in Craft contests at OWAA's 86th annual conference, Sept. 14-16, 2013, in Lake Placid, N.Y. First-, second- and third-place winners were chosen in nine contests. Entries were from work created in 2012. Cash prizes totaled more than \$10,000.

TOWA was well-represented, with four members garnering five awards, as follows:

TV/Video Contest, Conservation Category:

2nd Place: **Karen Loke**, "Cooks Branch Conservancy," YNN (Your News Now) Cable, June 1, 2012

TV/Video Contest, Family Participation/ Youth Outdoor Education Category:

3rd Place: **Karen Loke**, "School of Fishing: Hotsell Fishing Derby," YNN (Your News Now) Cable, April 8, 2012

Magazine Contest, Humor Category:

3rd Place: **Shane Townsend**, "The secret message behind baby turtle lures," MatadorGoods, Jan. 19, 2012

Illustration/Graphic Contest, Outdoor Humor Category:

3rd Place: **Sam Caldwell**, "Santa gets an outdoor gift from crew," Currents Newsletter, Dec. 1, 2012

Shannon Tompkins, 2013 Jade of Chiefs Award Winner:

First established in 1958, the Jade of Chiefs Award is the Outdoor Writers of America Association's top conservation award. It's awarded by past award winners, known as the Circle of Chiefs, who serve as OWAA's conservation conscience and conservation policy-makers. Past winners include such legendary outdoor writers as Nash Buckingham, John Madson, Les Line and Ted Williams.

The 87th annual OWAA conference will be held in McAllen, Texas, May 24 - 26, 2014. TOWA Executive Director Burney Brown will be coordinating with OWAA Executive Director Tom Sadler to determine how TOWA can best benefit from OWAA's presence in Texas.

For more information on the OWAA EIC contests visit <http://owaa.org/eic/>



TOP, left to right in front row: TOWA members Susan Ebert, Shannon Tompkins, Karen Loke and Shane Townsend, with Orange, Texas, OWAA member Dave Brown holding down the second row. ABOVE LEFT: Karen Loke enjoys the fruits of her labor after competing in the Camp Chef cook-off at breakout day. ABOVE RIGHT: Hobie's Ingrid Niehaus, left, points out some of the features of the new Hobie kayaks.



America's First Indoor Hunting Shooting Center Coming to Grapevine, Texas

CHANTILLY, VA. — American Sportsman Shooting Center Inc, a wholly owned subsidiary of Aimpoint Holding, has announced the launch of America's first indoor hunting shooting center – the Sportsman Shooting Center located in Grapevine, TX. Sportsman Shooting Center is a fully enclosed, indoor training center that provides the opportunity for shooters to practice on dynamic hunting scenarios inside an air conditioned, live-fire cinema range using their own rifle and ammunition. Blaser® R8 rifles will be available for rental, and Norma® ammunition available for purchase in all major hunting calibers. Aimpoint® sights will be offered as well.

Scheduled to open in September, 2013, the Sportsman Shooting Center will occupy a newly built, state of the art 9,000 square foot range facility in Grapevine, TX. This facility is the first of its kind in the USA, and will be used as a model for future locations across the country. The center will offer shooters access to an advanced three-part program:

A 100 yard, underground sighting tunnel allowing customers to zero their rifles and optics with electronic target scoring.

An interactive SimTarget® training simulator using a non-firing replica firearm fitted with an eye-safe laser emitter. This system allows an instructor to actively monitor and refine a shooter's form for greater accuracy.

The USA's first live-fire, cinema projection range, providing shooters the chance to practice their skills on a wide variety of realistic hunting scenarios from whitetail deer to African game. The scenarios are projected on a 12' x 30' screen with computerized scoring, and shooters may use their own rifle and live ammunition.

"Sportsman Shooting Center will quickly become an important asset in providing hunting and firearms safety training in the State of Texas" said Brian Lisankie, President of Aimpoint Holding Inc. "This unique facility provides a fun and exciting experience for everyone from the absolute beginner to the expert preparing for an international hunt. Since it is possible to modify the program to match the capabilities and needs of any shooter, we can offer a safe and enjoyable experience to anyone with an interest in hunting and shooting. We are very proud to bring this advanced technology to the USA."

Sportsman Shooting Center is located just minutes from Dallas-Fort Worth Airport in Grapevine, TX, making this location easily accessible to visitors from outside the area. With a wide variety of hotel accommodations and other local attractions including: a Bass Pro Shop, Grapevine Mills Mall, Gaylord Texan Convention Center, Great Wolf Lodge and outdoor themed restaurants, Grapevine is an attractive destination for the entire family.

For more information on American Sportsman Shooting Center Inc or Sportsman Shooting Center, please contact Kristi Drawe at Kristi.drawe@aimpoint.com.



PLEASE NOTE TOWA'S NEW CONTACT INFORMATION

We're pleased to welcome the services of Burney and Valerie Brown of Professional Association Management Services (PAMS) to serve as TOWA Executive Director. Burney welcomes calls and emails from members, so we encourage you to do so. The primary contact information for TOWA is:

TEXAS OUTDOOR WRITERS ASSOCIATION
P.O. BOX 151293
AUSTIN, TX 78715-1293
PHONE: (512) 358-8000 • FAX: (512) 358-8010
EMAIL: TOWA@TOWA.org

Deadline for 2014 TOWA EIC Contest is December 1, 2013

By Kendal Hemphill, EIC Chairman

Once again it's time to start collecting your best work of the past year to submit for our annual Excellence in Craft contest. The rules and categories remain the same as they were last year, and Chevy has committed to sponsor the awards as they have in the past.

Dr. Manuel Flores of Kingsville will handle the judging for us again, and we are looking forward to some stiff competition from our members. We believe Texas is home to the best outdoor writers in the country, and the quality of our EIC contest bears this out; Good luck to one and all!

The 2014 EIC entry form is provided on the following page as a service to our members who are gathering up their entries.

Members should be aware that the streamlined entry categories will be used again this year in order to provide a better showcase for the best works of our members.

Members submitting entries are being asked to make sure that their forms are taped to the clasplless side of envelopes and that in most categories, two copies be included.

Feel free to contact Hemphill at (325) 347-4051 or by email at jeep@verizon.net if you have any questions about the contest.

EXCELLENCE IN CRAFT CONTEST RULES AND GUIDELINES

1. Entries must be postmarked by Dec. 1, 2013. Entries postmarked after that date will be returned unopened.
 2. Each member is limited to no more than two entries per category. The same entry may be submitted in more than one category. The Over 25,000 circulation and Under 25,000 circulation division has been eliminated in all categories except for Outdoor Publications. See each category for details.
 3. Entries must have been published, distributed or broadcast in Texas between Oct. 15, 2012, and Nov. 15, 2013.
 4. Each entry must be accompanied by an official 2014 TOWA EIC entry form. Legible photocopies of the 2014 form are acceptable. Forms must be taped to the front side of the envelope.
 5. EIC officials will take measures to ensure that all entries are available to be picked up at the conference, but will not be responsible for loss. Those entries not picked up at the conference will be destroyed.
 6. Judges will be knowledgeable in the field they are asked to judge; as professionals, there will be no reason to delete bylines or names.
 7. The EIC chairman will be the sole judge of any dispute or question concerning the competition.
 8. Winners will be announced at the annual conference. All judges' decisions are final.
 9. Each entry must be submitted in a separate manila envelope. Two copies (one original and one photocopy is acceptable) of each entry in the writing categories must be submitted with one completed copy of the entry form. Send tear sheets, not complete publications. Note about Internet work: If an article has not been published and paid for, or used as a paid-for image in an Internet publication, it does not qualify. If work appeared on an Internet site, a printout of the web page will suffice as a tear sheet.
- Both copies of the printed material will be submitted in a clasp envelope, with the entry form taped to the front of the envelope. Clearly identify the category of each entry. Photos, books, tapes, DVDs and CDs should also be placed in a clasp envelope with the entry form taped to the clasp less side of the envelope. Identify each entry so that it may be identified if it is separated from the form. Only one copy of photography, radio and video entries is required. Photos should not be mounted. Photography entries must have a tear sheet attached showing the photo in print. Note about Internet work: If a photograph has not been published and paid for as a magazine image, or used as a paid-for image in an Internet publication, it does not qualify. The same qualification is true of illustrations. If work appeared on an Internet site, a printout of the web page will suffice as a tear sheet.
- Send a \$10 entry fee for each individual submission. Make all checks or money orders payable to TOWA. Do not send cash. You can include the fee for all entries on one check. If a check is not included with your entry package, the package will be returned to you marked, "Not valid for judging."
- CASH AWARDS:** A \$200 check will be awarded to first place winners in all categories; a \$50 check will be awarded to the second place winner; and a \$25 check will be awarded to the third place winner. Honorable mention recipients will continue to receive a certificate of their achievement.

TEXAS OUTDOOR WRITERS ASSOCIATION 2013 EXCELLENCE IN CRAFT ENTRY FORM

The Excellence In Craft Contest is an opportunity for active members to receive special recognition for journalism excellence. Submission must be outdoor-oriented and must have been published, broadcast or distributed in Texas. Associate members are not eligible.

The TOWA Excellence in Craft Contest is proudly sponsored by Chevrolet.

CATEGORY NUMBER: _____

CATEGORY: _____

TITLE: _____

Your Name: _____

Address: _____

Name Of Publication and Circulation: _____

Date of Publication: _____

Your Role In Production (Video/TV Radio ONLY): _____

Distribution/Further Information: _____

Certified Signature: _____

Date: _____

COMMENTS: (Purpose statement, technical data, etc. that might assist the judges in evaluating your entry)

Each entry in any category will require an entry fee of \$10. You may write one check for the total amount of all categories entered. All entries must be postmarked no later than Dec.1, 2012. Any entry received after this date will be returned unopened.

Send package and check (made out to TOWA) to: Kendal Hemphill
TOWA EIC Chairman
P.O. Box 1600
Mason, TX 76856

TEXAS OUTDOOR WRITERS ASSOCIATION

2013 EXCELLENCE IN CRAFT CATEGORIES

PHOTOS: Attach clipping or tear sheet showing photo in print. The distinction between color and black & white photos has been eliminated. Photos should not be mounted and cannot be more than 11x14 inches in total size. Tape a second copy of the entry form to the back of the photo. Entries should be mailed in a manila envelope. Tape entry form to flapless side of the envelope.

Category 1) Outdoor Photography, People - Photos with an outdoor-related theme. Members are allowed to enter two photos in each category. Include tear sheet or web printout and one print. A print of each photo is required for judging. No slides will be accepted.

Category 2) Outdoor Photography, Wildlife/Nature - Photos with an outdoor-related theme.

Members are allowed to enter two photos in each category. Include tear sheet or web printout and one print. A print of each photo is required for judging. No slides will be accepted.

Category 3) Outdoor Photography, Open - Photos on any outdoor-related subject. Members are allowed to enter two photos in each category. Include tear sheet or web printout and one print. A print of each photo is required for judging. No slides will be accepted.

Category 4) Outdoor Radio - Presentations and programs with an outdoor theme. Entries should be on cassette tape or CD and include no more than two programs. Date of broadcast will be certified on the entry form by station manager. Include two cassette tapes or CD copies of the program in a manila envelope. Tape entry form to flapless side of the envelope. Identify contest category on tape case in the event the tape becomes separated from entry envelope.

Category 5) Outdoor Television/Video - Presentations and programs with an outdoor theme. Entries can be instructional videos, commercial or non-commercial television programs, video news segments, for-profit productions, non-profit, agency, etc. Entering member's participation must be provided on entry form i.e., producer, narrator, camera operator, etc. Also, proof of distribution or airing must be certified on entry form by station manager for TV and producer for video. Include two VHS tapes or DVDs of the program in a manila envelope. Tape entry form to flapless side of the envelope. Identify contest category on tape case in the event the tape becomes separated from entry envelope.

Category 6) Outdoor Illustration/Graphic - Original artwork with an outdoor-related theme.

Artwork must have been published and be the sole work of the member. Include tear sheet showing publication or printout of web page showing art. IF SENDING ORIGINAL ART, mount on stock of appropriate size. Attach entry form to back of mounting stock.

Category 7) Outdoor Publication (Newspaper or Magazine) Under 25,000 - Publications with an outdoor-related theme. TWO copies of the entire, original publication are to be included in entry packet. The TOWA member submitting the entry must be responsible for overall production of the publication - editor, publisher, owner, etc. Role of the TOWA member must be included on the entry form. Place materials in a manila envelope. Tape entry form to flapless side of the envelope.

Category 8) Outdoor Publication (Newspaper or Magazine) Over 25,000 - Publications with an outdoor-related theme. TWO copies of the entire, original publication are to be included in entry packet. The TOWA member submitting the entry must be responsible for overall production of the publication - editor, publisher, owner, etc. Role of the TOWA member must be included on the entry form. Place materials in a manila envelope. Tape entry form to flapless side of the envelope.

Category 9) Outdoor Fiction/Humor - Fiction or Humor article with an outdoor-related theme. Can be from newspaper, magazine, Internet publication or newsletter. For individual articles/columns, submit only tear sheets. Do not send the entire publication. Entries should include two copies (one original tear sheet and one photocopy is acceptable). The copies should be submitted in manila envelope. Tape entry form to flapless side of the envelope.

Category 10) Outdoor Column/Opinion Writing - Bylined column on an outdoor-related topic. Can be from newspaper, magazine, Internet publication or newsletter. For individual articles/columns, submit only tear sheets. Do not send the entire publication.

Entries should include two copies (one original tear sheet and one photocopy is acceptable). The copies should be submitted in a manila envelope. Tape entry form to flapless side of the envelope.

Category 11) Newspaper Feature - Feature treatment of an outdoor-related topic in a newspaper of general circulation. Sidebars and graphics can be included. Submit one full-page tear sheet including byline, date and publication. Do not send the entire publication. Entries should include two copies (one original tear sheet and one photocopy is acceptable). The copies should be submitted in a manila envelope. Tape entry form to flapless side of the envelope.

Category 12) Magazine Feature - Feature treatment of an outdoor-related topic in a magazine of general circulation. Sidebars and graphics can be included. For individual articles/columns, submit only tear sheets. Do not send the entire publication. Entries should include two copies (one original tear sheet and one photocopy is acceptable). The copies should be submitted in a manila envelope. Tape entry form to flapless side of the envelope.

Category 13) Outdoor Feature, Open - Feature treatment of an outdoor-related topic in any publication of general circulation or other outdoor media venue. Sidebars and graphics can be included. For individual articles/columns, submit only tear sheets. Do not send the entire publication. Entries should include two copies (one original tear sheet and one photocopy is acceptable). The copies should be submitted in a manila envelope. Tape entry form to flapless side of the envelope. Radio and television/video entries must follow guidelines in Categories 4 and 5.

Category 14) Outdoor News Reporting - Reporting

of an outdoor-related issue. This is a category for articles generally considered to be objective reporting of facts and issues surrounding a topic or topics, and is to be judged by accepted standards of journalism. A series of articles on a single issue may be considered a single entry. Sidebars and graphics may be included. For individual articles/columns, submit only tear sheets. Do not send the entire publication. Entries should include two copies (one original tear sheet and one photocopy is acceptable). The copies should be submitted in a manila envelope. Tape entry form to flapless side of the envelope.

Category 15) Outdoor Book - Published book on an outdoor-related subject. Book can be fiction or non-fiction. Book must have been published during contest year. One copy of the book should be included in the entry packet, with entry forms attached to the books. Book will be returned at conference.

Category 16) Outdoor Web Page - Web site with an outdoor-related theme. Sites should be judged on their usefulness to the public and/or outdoor communicators. Entrants should include web address on entry form, and contest chairman will pass these addresses along to judges. The copies should be submitted in a manila envelope. Tape entry form to flapless side of the envelope.

Category 17) Special Projects/Conservation - An article or broadcast that takes a conservation stand on a specific outdoor-related issue or educates and informs the public about conservation efforts. With videotape and radio entries, the entry must be the first and preferably only thing on the tape. A statement of the writer's/ broadcaster's purpose or background on the issue is encouraged on the entry form, as this could assist judges in gauging impact of the work. For individual articles/ columns, submit only tear sheets. Do not send the entire publication. Entries should include two copies (one original tear sheet and one photocopy is acceptable). For video entries, submit two video tapes or DVDs. For radio entries, submit two cassettes or CDs. The copies should be submitted in a manila envelope. Tape entry form to flapless side of the envelope.

Category 18) Original Internet Story/Blog - An article with an outdoor-related topic for which payment was received. Must be an original story and not a reprint. Entries should include two copies of the web page. The copies should be submitted in a manila envelope. Tape entry form to flapless side of the envelope.

TOWA Outstanding Outdoor Achievement Award: (Trophy Only) - Recognition of outstanding contribution or performance of a supporting member in assisting TOWA in achieving its efforts to increase public awareness, understanding and appreciation of our outdoor heritage in the use and enjoyment of our natural resources. Nominees and a short letter of recommendation may be submitted to any member of the board.

OUTDOOR JOB OPENINGS

Sporting Classics, founded in 1981, is a national hunting and fishing magazine directed toward affluent, educated sportsmen who love to read. It is unique in that it is about the heritage, the romance, and the art of hunting and fishing. We publish magazines, books, digital newsletters and informational web sites.

Our offices are in Columbia, South Carolina. We have three positions open for people who are willing to locate here and become a vital part of our future as we cement our position in print while expanding further into digital publishing.

We seek the following:

1. Designer/art-creative director for *Sporting Classics* magazine

This person will be responsible for the look of *Sporting Classics*, its web sites, and related promotional materials. The job requires you be a seasoned designer, know print and web production, have good communication skills and possess the ability to work with the editor, writers and sources for illustration and photography. You will also manage a graphics arts assistant. It will be very helpful if you know hunting and fishing.

2. Editor for our digital newsletter, *Sporting Classics Daily*

This person is responsible for gathering, editing, writing and uploading to templates our digital newsletter, *Sporting Classics Daily*. You should be able to attend trade shows, work with other writers, advertisers and under the supervision of current *Sporting Classics* editor, Chuck Wechsler. The right person will also serve as an assistant editor for *Sporting Classics* magazine. It will be very helpful if the candidate knows hunting and fishing.

3. Associate Editor of *Sporting Classics* magazine

This person will work directly with Chuck Wechsler, editor of *Sporting Classics*, who is due to retire at some point over the next year. The position requires very good communications skills, the ability to work with writers, designers, artists, ad agencies, and advertisers, and that you attend several yearly trade shows. You should be an excellent proofreader. You must be a capable, experienced writer though you do not have to be the world's greatest author. You do need to be very good at gathering our kind of magazine content. It will be helpful if the candidate knows hunting and fishing because this position will receive writing assignments to some world's great hunting and fishing destinations.

Salaries will be commensurate with abilities.

Please send resumes to:

Sporting Classics Magazine
Duncan Grant, Publisher
117 Alpine Circle
Columbia, SC 29223
803-736-2527
duncan@sportingclassics.com



Texas Game Wardens Organize First-Ever K9 Unit

AUSTIN — For the first time in their history, Texas Game Wardens have a full-time, statewide canine team.

The first five canine handlers and dogs have graduated from an intense eight-week training program located at the world famous Utah POST canine facility in Salt Lake City. The second wave of canine handlers and dogs will attend the course in January 2014.

"The K9 program has been a long time coming, and we are extremely proud of our handlers for their hard work – an effort which resulted in a 100 percent pass rate," said Grahame Jones, Chief of Special Operations for the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department Law Enforcement Division. "In addition to excellent support from the department and the Parks and Wildlife Commission, we would like to thank the Travis County Sheriff's Department, Texas Department of Public Safety, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, and the Texas Parks and Wildlife Foundation for assisting during the planning phase."

Funding for the purchase of dogs and travel to and from Utah was provided by the TPW Foundation through a private donor. Utah Post provided the training at no cost with the exception of a minimal administrative fee, an amount also paid for by the private donor.

Depending on geographical location, the dogs will be used for various functions including detection of illegally taken or smuggled game and fish, search and rescue, cadaver search, and narcotics enforcement. "Most of the dogs will have dual functions such as wildlife detection and search and rescue," said Game Warden Capt. Kevin Davis, who oversees the canine program.

"I am gratified to assist Texas Game Wardens in their efforts to diminish the trafficking of contraband in their communities," said Sgt. Wendell Nope, Utah Post K9 Training Director. "I look forward to working with TPWD in the near future to further enhance the abilities of the canines and handlers in search and rescue situations."

"We cannot thank Utah Post enough for their partnership and professionalism," said Col. Craig Hunter, LE Division Director. "The department is extremely excited to see the Texas Game Warden K9 team become a reality."

For more information, contact Mike Cox at (512) 389-8046 or via email at mike.cox@tpwd.texas.gov.