

CHARACTERISTICS AND ATTITUDES OF WEST CENTRAL TEXAS HUNTERS, 1971-72

by

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ABSTRACT

A telephone survey of 201 hunters was conducted in 1972 in Taylor County in West Central Texas. Most respondents were between 30 and 60 years old, had been introduced to hunting at an early age by a relative, and preferred the aesthetic benefits of hunting to the pursuit of trophies or meat.

Wildlife management is based on the assumption that wildlife provides benefits to people (Hendee 1972). Benefits may be tangible, such as trophies and meat, or they may be intangible, such as esthetic appreciation, outdoor recreation, companionship, character development, and intellectual satisfaction (Stokes 1966, Ashcroft 1967, Davis 1967, Peterle 1967). Many wildlife managers have been concerned primarily with increasing the harvest of game but not in increasing the intangible benefits of hunting.

Several researchers have reported an average hunter has a medium income, a moderate education, is 35 to 40 years of age, and is in the middle occupational social class (Kirkpatrick 1965, Davis 1967, Lobdell 1967, Peterle 1967, Bevins et al. 1968, Sendak 1968). Additional research into the motivations behind hunting and the benefits and satisfactions derived from hunting is needed to insure maximum utilization of the wildlife resources available.

This need for information is particularly evident in Texas since commercial harvest systems have become the principal means of game cropping and hunter management (Teer and Forrest 1968). Most hunting in Texas is done by lease on private lands where access is controlled by the landowners. Wildlife management practices must thus be applied indirectly through the landowners to benefit hunters.

The most effective and widely used research tool available to gather information about hunting and the hunter is the survey (Frazier 1973). However, the accuracy of surveys designed to obtain hunting statistics can be affected by sampling errors, response errors, and non-response errors (Chapman et al. 1959). Sampling error results when the sample is not representative of the universe of interest. It can be reduced by using a sufficient sample size and proper sampling techniques such as random selection of the survey population.

Response errors in hunter surveys occur when respondents give faulty replies. Many respondents tend to report more hunting activity and better success than they experienced. This type of error is present in any survey based on hunters recollections of success.

Non-response errors in surveys occur when members of the survey population do not answer the questions. They may simply decline to answer, or they may not be available to answer. There will be no significant error due to non-response if there is no difference between the hunting success or characteristics of the hunters who return questionnaires and those who do not. However, if the hunting characteristics of the respondents and non-respondents differ then the non-response error may be substantial (Robertson 1958, Eberhardt and Murray 1960, Hayne 1964). This type of error is minimized through proper sampling techniques and persistence in trying to contact the non-respondents.

This study characterizes some aspects of the hunter in West Central Texas and evaluates benefits and satisfactions hunting provides.

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METHODS

Names of 750 licensed hunters were obtained from 1971 license receipts in Taylor County, Texas. A list of 300 random numbers between 1 and 750 was secured. The 300 numbers selected were applied to a numbered list of selected names to determine the survey population. Due to limited time on the project, this was the maximum number of names that could be obtained from license receipts and the maximum number of people who could be surveyed. Each person was called between September and November, 1972 and asked ten questions about themselves and their hunting experiences during the 1971-72 hunting season. The survey questions were selected from Peterle (1967).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Survey Response

Of 300 people selected, 201 (67 percent) responded, 68 (22.7 percent) had no telephone, and 31 (10.3 percent) declined to answer the questions. This response compares favorably with the response of 50 to 75 percent from mail surveys (Snyder 1963, More 1970, Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Game 1971, Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries Commission 1972, and Oldenburg and Bhornn 1972).

Table 1. Ages of West Central Texas respondents, ages at which respondents started hunting, and relationship of persons introducing respondents to hunting.

	<i>Number of Respondents</i>	<i>Percent of Respondents</i>
Age of Respondents		
Under 20	8	3.9
20-30	15	7.5
30-40	43	21.4
40-50	62	30.9
50-60	49	24.4
Over 60	24	11.9
Total	201	100.0
Age First Hunted		
Under 11	97	48.3
11-13	42	20.9
14-17	24	11.9
18-25	14	7.0
After 26	23	11.4
Did not know	1	.5
Total	201	100.0
Persons Introducing Respondents to Hunting		
Parent	100	49.8
Self	45	22.4
Friend	20	9.9
Brother	15	7.5
Spouse	10	4.9
Uncle	4	2.0
Grandparents	4	2.0
Cousin	2	1.0
Son	1	.5
Total	201	100.0

Table 2. Number of days the respondents hunted during the 1971-72 hunting season in West Central Texas.

<i>Number of Days Hunted</i>	<i>Number of Respondents</i>	<i>Percent of Respondents</i>
1- 5	45	24.6
5-10	47	25.7
10-15	26	14.2
15-20	11	6.0
20-25	11	6.0
Over 25	43	23.5
Total	183	100.0

Table 3. Species of game hunted by respondents in West Central Texas, 1971-72.²

<i>Game</i>	<i>Number of Respondents</i>	<i>Percent of Respondents</i>
Mourning Dove <i>Zenaidura macroura</i>	139	76.0
Bobwhite Quail <i>Colinus virginianus</i>	121	66.3
White-tailed Deer <i>Odocoileus virginianus</i>	109	59.7
Wild Turkey <i>Meleagris gallopavo</i>	59	32.2
Waterfowl	21	15.5
Squirrel <i>Sciurus</i> sp.	6	3.3
Pheasant <i>Phasianus colchicus</i>	4	2.2
Rabbit <i>Lepus</i> sp. and <i>Sylvilagus</i> sp.	4	2.2
Coyote <i>Canis latrans</i>	3	1.6
Javalina <i>Pecari tajacu</i>	3	1.6
Armadillo <i>Dasypus novemcinctus</i>	2	1.1
Fox <i>Vulpes</i> sp. and <i>Urocyon</i> sp.	2	1.1
Raccoon <i>Procyon lotor</i>	2	1.1
Bobcat <i>Lynx rufus</i>	1	0.5
Opossum <i>Didelphis marsupialis</i>	1	0.5
Prairie chicken <i>Tympanuchus</i> sp.	1	0.5
Skunk <i>Spilogale</i> sp. and <i>Mephitis</i> sp.	1	0.5

² Scientific names from Davis (1974) and Robbins et al. (1966).

Table 4. Respondents' motives surrounding the hunting experience.

<i>Reason</i>	<i>Number of Respondents</i>	<i>Percent of Respondents</i>
<i>Consumptive</i>		
Meat	30	14.9
Predator Control	3	1.5
Trophy	2	1.0
<i>Non-Consumptive</i>		
Outdoor Recreation	164	81.6
Companionship	9	4.5
Meet a Challenge	3	1.5
Wildlife Observation	3	1.5
Enjoy Watching Dogs Work	3	1.5

Sociological Aspects

Of 201 respondents in this survey 88.5 percent were ages 30 to 60 (Table 1). Only 11.5 percent of respondents were under 30. The small sample size may have biased the age classes, and the younger persons may be less likely to have telephones than older individuals. However, the number of respondents under 30 may reflect the national trend of a decreasing proportion of hunters in younger age classes.

Of the 201 respondents 69.2 percent began hunting before the age of 13 (Table 1). Studies consistently show that childhood participation in hunting is the most important variable in predicting adult participation (Bevins et al. 1968, Sendak 1968, Greene 1970). Almost 50 percent of the respondents were introduced to hunting by a parent.

Hunting Season Aspects

Respondents who did not hunt in West Central Texas during the 1971-72 season were not asked how often and which species were hunted because this survey was only concerned with those who had hunted in this region. Of the respondents 183 (91.5 percent) hunted in West Central Texas during the 1971-72 season while 18 respondents (8.5 percent) did not hunt in this region.

The majority of respondents who did not hunt in West Central Texas during the 1971-72 hunting season hunted elsewhere in the state. Most had hunting leases in various parts of Texas, while some hunted in other areas. Of 183 respondents 138 indicated that they hunted 6 or more days during the season (Table 2).

Mourning doves (*Zenaidura macroura*), bobwhite quail (*Colinus virginianus*), and white-tailed deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*) were hunted by a majority of respondents (Table 3). The popularity of these species reflects the amount of sport involved in hunting them, meat value, and availability (West Central Texas Council of Govts 1971). Waterfowl and wild turkeys (*Meleagris gallopavo*) were the only other species hunted by more than 6 respondents.

Of 217 reasons given for hunting, 182 reflected non-consumptive benefits (Table 4). This study supports Hendee and Potter (1971) in stressing that non-consumptive wildlife values of hunting deserve more attention from managers.

Of the 201 respondents, 65 (32.3 percent) hunt as often as they wish, while 136 (67.7 percent) would like to hunt more often. Respondents who would prefer to hunt more often gave lack of time and lack of opportunity as their reasons for not being able to hunt enough.

Of the respondents 152 (75.6 percent) said that they would pay a landowner for the right to hunt on his land, while 49 (24.4 percent) said they would not pay a landowner to hunt.

Of 109 people who hunted deer during 1971-72, 92 said they were successful, an 83.5 percent hunter success rate.

MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

This study characterizes the hunter in West Central Texas and provides insight into his motivations for hunting. Respondents indicated a clear preference of non-consumptive values over consumptive uses of wildlife. This survey has shown that respondents expect outdoor recreation and esthetic enjoyments as well as trophies and meat from their hunting experiences. These hunter expectations should be considered in future planning for the West Central Texas area.

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