



December 11, 2012

To all THC Members:



Forrest Stewart, Josh Grizzle, and "Crockett" at Rod North Pond

2nd Opening Weekend Results

Once again, under less than optimal hunting conditions, 55 hunters bagged 298 birds for 5.4-birds/hunter/day average. Dependent on where you hunted you got either quality birds or not-so-quality birds, commonly referred to as trash ducks, but if you wanted to sling some lead and come home with some birds it was best to take what Mother Nature delivered. The Middle Pond at Oak Meadows once again produced some full straps of gadwalls. The Fox Pond has finally turned on after countless attempts to make it right through aerial spraying, weed cutting, and deep flooding; Saturday's hunters saw large flocks of green-winged teal and pintails. The DU pond produced quality ducks both on Saturday and Sunday, as did all the ponds in Francitas with a lot of pintails and teal.

We have not had a significant "bird moving" front in quite some time, but I suspect the arctic front that came through earlier this week carried a bunch of new birds on the back end of it.

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Josh & Andrew Grizzle's Record Shoot

Josh Grizzle Leaves on a High Note - A Club Record?

When given lemons you make lemonade. That is exactly what Josh Grizzle and Forrest Stewart did on Josh's bon voyage hunt with Thunderbird. I tagged along totting a gun and camera to spend the morning at the "lemonade stand" with them. First thing in the morning we walked into a roar of wings churning off the water, "Hear that guys, that's all ducks, big flocks of pintails and teal that I had seen yesterday!" Weeeeee...it didn't quite turn out that way. At **five minutes past "legal"** I halted the hunt for a count - 26 birds, 4 more to go, a pile of "smil'n greater blue-winged spoonies." At that time I reconfirmed, "Guys this pond was loaded with pintails and teal, only saw a handful of spoonies." Needing photos of Josh's dog with something other than a greater-billed duck in its mouth I did something I normally do not sanction, "Lets wait for a few pintails." If we had not decided to wait on sprigs there is no doubt that we would have had 30 ducks in six minutes. While we had no intent on dropping that many birds that fast and this is by no means a gauge of a "Great Outdoor Experience", it was though a remarkable morning. I have seen large clouds of spiraling pintails drop from the heavens, have seen some massive flights of green-wings swarm over the decoys, had entire roost ponds of geese land in the decoys, but never

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in my life have I seen such a shoveler show. Normally a large flight of shovelers is considered a group of no more than a dozen birds, but on this morning the shovelers came in flocks of hundreds and at least twice we had over thousand of them circling the blind. Where the pintails and teal disappeared to and where all the shovelers came from is anyone's guess, but it just goes to show you how fast our birds can change. While our scouting reports have significantly helped everyone shoot more birds, it is not an exact science and can change overnight (like the weather), as seen on this morning. Final tally for the morning, 30 ducks and 6 geese, and a great send off for Josh.



"Crockett" Retrieving a Canada Goose at Rod North Pond

Portable Blind Installed at Rod North - Well Struck by Lightning

We have installed a portable type blind in the middle of Rod North where the spoonbill shoot occurred over the weekend. There is a dog stand and three bags of decoys, but you will need portable seats to hunt this blind along with a few cut pieces of brush from the bank to help spruce up any openings. This pond will most likely hunt well on Wednesday, but no guarantees on what you will shoot! Rob and Paul shot a limit of teal the last weekend of the first split.

The well on this property was struck by lightning last week. Two circuit boxes were fried along with the electrical lines. Apparently lightning in other areas did a lot of damage. Currently we are in waiting in line for the electricians to fix the damage. The well will be restarted as soon as the problem is repaired.

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The "Inmarsat" Group

29 Ducks (Pintails, Gadwalls, and Green-wings) and 2 Geese from DU 4 Blind

Wednesday Rotation

We should have a fresh batch of birds at our doorsteps this coming Wednesday. The following ponds will be open, DU Pond, Fox Pond, Marshall Pond, Zack Pond, Kate Pond, Railroad Pond, and Rod North Pond. In the event we have overflow, where I think a group will not have a good place to hunt, we will open up Francitas. If that should happen I will give every group a call so they can rechoose their ponds based on their groups order in the "draw."



Pintails Landing in the DU Pond

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Eat Like a King at the Lodge

Eating at the Thunderbird Lodge is an impromptu affair, but one thing is certain there is never a shortage of meat to satisfy everyone's carnivorous appetites. If you were luckily enough to be at the lodge this past weekend you got to partake in "the feast." Seven types of baked oysters, Cajun cooked chicken and pork ribs, whole baby pig, sausage of many makings, you did not go to bed hungry. There is way to many members to thank individually for their donation of food, cooking efforts, and final feast cleanup, but on behalf of everyone that partook in the efforts, thank you, especially for not leaving me a mess to cleanup on Sunday afternoon!



**Weekend Menu at the Lodge
(That's the New Cajun Cooker Compliments of the Inmarsat Group)**

Best regards,

Todd Steele & Paul McDonald

cc: Rob Sawyer, Allen Coleman, Mary McDonald, and Nancy Steele

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