



November 29, 2017

To All THC Members:



**Bob Felinski, David Billings, & Robert Sanford  
29 Birds from Brooks Pond on Wednesday (24 Ducks & 5 Specks)**

### **Third Full Week Results**

Wednesday morning I sat in a blind with my entire family along with James Shelton and witnessed one of those magical mornings few get to experience. A 360° panorama of wings, heads in the blind contorting and twisting, speculating on what swarm of locked pintails or buzzing wads of teal I would call "shoot'em." But I didn't. I just let the first wave of hundreds touchdown to my side in the rising orange light. I heard "wow" whispered more than once and my dear wife Nancy said she had not seen pintails like this since the early 80's. It was not until the 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> blanket of birds alighted that the morning's silence was broken. This hunt is etched solidly in my memory bank.

**1539 South Mason Road, Suite 74, Katy, Texas 77450**

**Todd Steele 713.705.2370 (todd.steele@sbcglobal.net) - Travis Peterson 832.457.2109 (travis@oplawns.com)**

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Birds on a strap cannot measure quality hunts, but let's face it if we sit in a blind and watch a morning break over the wetlands without birds it is pretty disheartening. The manifestation of months of work, efforts on behalf of staff, timely cold fronts, too much rain followed by Sahara-like drought conditions have produced for Thunderbird an outstanding First Split. As predicted we exceeded the 2k mark for bagged birds with 2,004 harvested, exceeding the previous high of 1,595. We averaged 5.4 birds/gun/day, the second best ever for the club. 70% of our groups shot full limits on ducks (66 out of 95), the highest ever for the First Split. We could not ask for much more and are humbled by the bounty God has blessed us with.

For the third and last full week of the First Split 102 guns shot 538 birds for an average of 5.4 BGD. Full limits were shot by 17 out of 27 groups on the following ponds; Bluewing, Brooks, Crawfish, Gadwall (2), Hunter, Lodge, Marsh, Middle (2), Remington, Shoveler, Swale (2), Toby, and Widgeon (2). Only "pond" left standing with 100% limits is the marsh and perhaps that is not a fair comparison considering it is 600+ acres in size with dozens of ponds interlaced through the system, but each and every limit is earned thanks to Curtis Bixler's efforts.



**The Steele's  
Forrest, Nancy, Todd, "Toby," & Hunter - 30 Birds - Crawfish Ponds**

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### **Thunderbird Hunting Club - Migration Update - 11/29/17**

Well we now have plenty of geese, even saw a few Canada's yesterday. Geese were on every single pond I visited yesterday! Redheads and canvasbacks are piling into the Lodge Pond at OM. Nice push of gadwalls and shovelers also occurred over the past two days. Still swarms of pintails and teal on all of our properties, simply mind-boggling at times. Conditions are dry here, in Arkansas, Kansas, all over. Ponds with water and veggies are in demand, and we have plenty of them!



**The Likover's**

**The "Tuna Slayer" Clay on the left, the "Good Doc" Larry in middle, and Collin on Right  
Full Duck Limits at the Middle Pond**

Still plenty of birds holding up north, but that is fixing to change next week, a strong front will dump snow across the northern plains and put them into the deep freeze. We may experience temps in the upper 30's come the opening day. Expect the fantastic to become squared. Unlike the first opening where we shot mostly bluewings, this opener will be a smorgasbord of birds. And get the kinks worked out of your speck call, they are everywhere!

### **The THC Grill**

What is the most abused thing at Thunderbird, not counting myself or Travis? It's the grill. Cooked on almost 24/7, often left on to burn leftovers into tarred jerky, and never ever cleaned by anyone! Time to see the grill doctor. Not sure if it will make it back for the second opener, guess it depends on what the "doc" discovers. Let's hope for the best.

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**"The Diver Hunt"**

**3-Man Lodge Pond Limits - Canvasbacks, Redheads, Bluebills, Ringnecks, & Ruddy Ducks  
Fred Kingwell & Phil Dart**



**Middle Pond Full Limits**

**Mark Spicer & Son, Rocky Baker, & Curtis Bixler**

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### **THC Pond Updates**

Water wells are running everywhere and starting tomorrow I will stay with them until the water levels are ideal for our food sources and waterfowl. I am seeing some good plant growth occurring in shallow flats that drew down from the drought, toothcup, and barnyard grass is growing in abundance, favorites of seed loving ducks such as pintails and greenwings. The Blue Creek well is up and running as of this afternoon. For those of you lucky enough to experience the duck spectacle on this property just wait until we get everything pumped up. Guessing we had only 60% of the property pumped when the well went down due to a power surge.

For the first time since teal season ducks are going back into the Cali Pond. The duck salad is finally receded back enough to allow some open water for the birds, expect this pond to really turn on shortly. The Northern Roost has had geese feeding in the flooded rice for the past week along with large groups of teal and pintails. Even the duck pond at the bottom of the list, Bo Pond, is attracting large flocks of ducks and geese, regardless of the nesting bald eagles a short distance away.

Over at OM the Remington Pond is starting to attract waterfowl. Winchester has now drawn down low enough that a lot of birds are using it as a loafing spot to roost, loaf, and escape high winds. Middle and Swale loaded again with thousands of ducks and geese. Only ponds not producing are Bay West and Bay East, it appears that the widgeon grass was severely distressed from Hurricane Harvey. Also Appelt Pond, one of our top draws and producers seems to be lagging. Not sure why as there is still matts of southern naiad in the pond. Could be that the other ponds are so prolific that they are flocking to them instead.



**Swale Pond – 31 Birds**

**Another Limit Hunt for the Brien-Hayes-Brown Group – 9 Full Limit Hunts in a Row**

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### Saturday Work Party

Don't forget to e-mail me by Friday if you can help at this Saturday's work party starting at the lodge at 7 AM.



**Nice Looking Full Straps from the Widgeon Pond  
Chad & Cameron Crim and Will Ellis**



**The Peninsula Blind @ Swale Pond  
4-man Duck Limits by the Dauzat Party**

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### **Your Ideas Contest - Free Gift Cards**

Still time to put your two-cents of information into the following categories for gift cards, this includes managers, but not the Peterson's or Steele's

Deadline for entry is Sunday evening 12/3.

Here is where it stands so far:

- Best Member Photo:
  - Have a couple of good ones, but they can be beat
- Best Idea to Improve the Club
  - Have a rock solid idea, already in use, but feel free to submit other ideas
- Best Hunting Tip
  - Wide open on this one
- Best Guest / Member Statement
  - Changed it to include members, two rock solid statements, but they can be trumped by a talented wordsmith
- Best New Rule
  - Wide open on this one, but it has to be a rule we can use effectively to better the club



**"Dual Doubles"**

**Forrester and Hunter coming back with their Doubles on Teal  
A contest-winning photo for sure, except taken by Nancy Steele!**

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### An Apology

As with any loving parents we tried our best to raise our "boys" right. Good ethical and Christian upbringing, unconditional love, diligent on their path in life, their friends they choose, the organizations they participate in. Both Nancy and I are very proud that two of our boys became Eagle Scouts at a young age and have led being Senior Patrol Leaders in the Troop and other organizations they have been associated with.



"Toby"

But our other son..."Toby," is another story, and we both apologize for his recalcitrant behavior. When not hunting Toby has only one thing on his mind, "love." We have tried everything short of castration. He slips dog collars like Houdini, chews through rope leads like a hot sword dipping into a tub of Blue Bell. Toby breaks out of kennels and pens with such ease that had he been locked up on Alcatraz Island he would have escaped, swam across San Francisco Bay, and terrorized poodles and terriers on Lombard Street. I have tried to no avail shocking Toby with the absolute highest STIM levels on E-collars, levels that would have cooked a steak well-done. Toby's need to pass on the genetic code is unsurpassed in any canine, or living creature on the planet for that matter. Now he is one heck of a fine looking retriever (part of the reason we believe he is so full of himself) and has had probably more photos published of himself than any other hunting dog in the country. And at 10 years old, equivalent to a 90-year old grandpa, he still is chasing the girls around the room. Cynologists have an interest in his drive to propagate!

PS Fred Shannon, Toby really misses the true love of his life, Maggie, and wishes you would rejoin!

Until the second opening!

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**"Toby" busting out through reinforced hog-wire door with four hinges and three latches  
Would someone please find this dog a companion?**

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