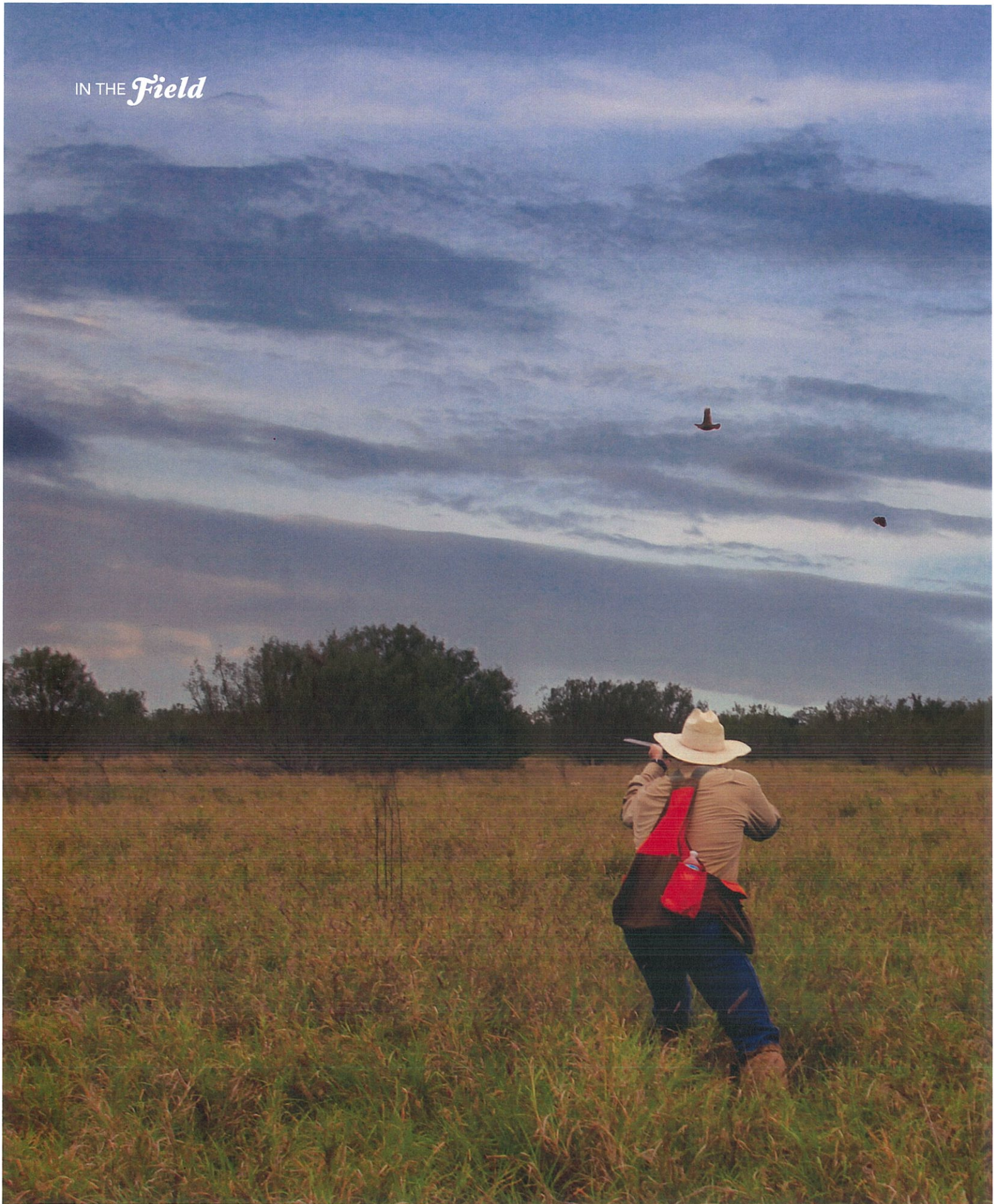


IN THE *Field*





Brush Country

Big Bucks and Bobwhites

ARTICLE AND PHOTOS BY **GAYNE C. YOUNG**

Gordie screeched and for a moment I thought I was hunting with his preteen daughter rather than him. I forgave his sudden 15 octave jump when I saw six-foot of coiled diamondback raise its head to knee level in angered frenzy just in front of him.

And that concluded my quail hunt for the day.

The others in my party were still game, however, and opted to continue hunting

(after the snake died from an overdose of 20 gauge lead poisoning that is) while I returned to the truck to quench my hard-earned afternoon thirst. By the time I had finished, Gordie and friends Dan, David, and John Higman had limited out. Not bad for South Texas wild quail hunting in this day and age.

Not bad at all.

I was quail hunting the Dos Condados Ranch near Rio Grande City, Texas at the

IN THE *Field*





invitation of my friend and owner of Gordie White Worldwide Hunting, Gordie White. Meaning two counties in Spanish, this family owned and operated swath of more than 2,800 acres spread along the border of Starr and Jim Hogg counties is the poster child for how the right wildlife management practices can produce vast numbers of quail and huge trophy whitetail deer. Owner Keith Burns explained to me later that evening that “habitat, nutrition and management” have been the biggest factors in his property’s change and that he and the rest of his family are thrilled with the results. These results, almost a decade in the making, include occasionally seeing more than 30 coveys of bobwhite and blue quail in a day and deer measuring upwards of 200 inches and reaching weights of over 220 pounds. I must admit, I was slightly doubtful of the quail numbers given the recent decline of wild quail hunting in Texas but was fully convinced during my two and a half day hunt. On our first day afield, dog handler Drew Hubert’s pointers found 12 coveys by noon. After a short siesta, they pointed another eight; so many birds in fact that we all limited out by early afternoon. The next day was a repeat of the first albeit with an additional nine coveys, one of which held more than 25 birds. Keith was ecstatic at our success but quick to relay that the previous hunters had lucked into 30 plus coveys in a day.

I think “lucked” is the key word there.

During these hunts the birds were frantic and the shooting kinetic. Drew’s dogs worked hard and because of the spurts of near constant action had to be rotated out numerous times throughout the day. The action was so intense and the birds so plentiful that more than once I asked Gordie for assurance that the ranch wasn’t





stocked with game birds. Gordie promised me that it wasn't. "Keith and his group just give the birds what they want and need," Gordie explained. "They have plenty of natural food and ample cover."

I returned two weekends later to see how these management practices translated to deer. I was again accompanied by Gordie and we were met at the ranch by hunting friends Mike Gallo and Rick Papera from New Jersey. Prior to our hunt Keith detailed just what a miracle the quality of deer on the ranch have become. Following a flash fire that left a good third of the ranch charred beyond recognition, the Burns' figured they'd never see quality deer on their property but, again, with proper management and nutrition the ranch now carries a ratio of one doe to one buck and an average of one deer to every three to five acres.

"Some like a few more does to bucks or a few less bucks," Keith explained. "But we like the ratio the way it is and I really like

the way the ratio works come the rut for rattling. You definitely see a lot of action the way we have it setup."

For my first evening hunt, Gordie and I sat in a tower blind overlooking the convergence of three senders. Does and fawns appeared in these open areas almost immediately after we got settled and these were followed by a sounder of javelina and more does and a few small bucks. I was watching a group of three of the latter when Gordie jerked suddenly. I turned just in time to see tail feathers rise above the window he was looking out. "Harris hawk!" Gordie exclaimed via an excited whisper. "Thought he was going to fly in the window there for a second. You see the talons on that sucker?!" The hawk then used these talons - I assume that's what he was using - to knead the roof of our blind like a cat does a scratching post. My mind was taken from this annoyance a few moments later when Gordie spotted a 10-point coming into the cut before us. "He's nice," Gordie

whispered from behind his binoculars. "But a little young." I nodded and watched deer and javelina and listened to the raptor kneading the roof until last shooting light.

Gordie and I returned to the same blind and almost the same action the next morning. The sun had barely been up a half hour before we heard a shot in the distance. "I think that was Mike," Gordie offered. I concurred then returned to watching does, fawns, and several young 10-point bucks browse the cuts we sat over. Around nine o'clock, Gordie got a text from Keith asking if we'd seen any shooters. Gordie replied that we hadn't and Keith responded with an invitation to return to the ranch house for the opportunity to try some rattling. We did just that and not an hour later Gordie's imitation of two bucks going at it brought a huge 12-point into a clearing not 50 yards from where Keith and I sat hidden beneath a mesquite tree. Unfortunately, the buck didn't present a shot and left. Gordie brought in a second

buck at a different location not a half-hour later. This buck was too small. At the third location, not 15 minutes after moving from the second, Gordie brought in a third buck. And this buck was just right.

For anyone after a major trophy.

Me, I was invited for a management buck. Management buck or not, rattling in three bucks in such a short amount of time was a thrill and I had a blast doing so. During our drive back to the house for an early lunch we jumped four coveys of quail and countless dove. Keith smiled at the site then told me he felt confident I'd get a buck that evening. We returned to the main house to find Keith's son Andy and Mike taking care of the buck Mike had gotten that morning. It was a huge bodied management 10-point that weighed 210 pounds on the hoof and carried a raw score of 157 inches.

Later that afternoon, Rick took a smaller bodied 10-point with a live weight of 185 pounds that carried the exact total of inches as Mike's deer. He did this while Gordie and I sat for a third time in our familiar tower blind. The scene there mirrored our previous visits with the exception of the hawk returning with a friend or mate (we weren't sure which it was). Neither Gordie or I could tell what they were doing on the roof but it sounded like they were cutting pico de gallo given all the talon tapping and scratching going on. I was at my wits end after 25 minutes of this and about ready to punch the ceiling when Gordie nodded toward the cut to our right. I turned and saw him immediately. He stood far taller than the bucks that gave way before him and looked to outweigh these by 20 to 30 pounds. Gordie beat me to the punch by announcing, "He's an 11 pointer and a taker." I eased into my .300, found the buck in my scope, and squeezed the trigger. The rifle roared, Gordie cursed my muzzle break, and the deer dropped. "I'll congratulate you as soon as my ears quit ringing," Gordie promised in an above normal tone. The buck was a brute with a live weight of slightly over 200 pounds and carried headgear that measured 156 inches. He was a great deer, a great reminder of a fantastic time, and part of a "management" plan that was working producing tremendous results. ♣

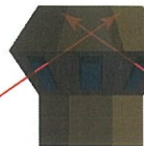
GUNS, LOADS AND GEAR

For quail I used a 20 gauge Krieghoff Essencia Game Gun (krieghoff.com). For my management buck I used my trusty Legendary Arms Works (legendaryarmsworks.com) Professional chambered in .300 Win Mag topped with a Swarovski Habicht AV 4-12 x

50mm scope loaded with Hornady Superformance 150 grain GMX bullets. Gordie White is the owner of Gordie White Worldwide Hunting (gwhunts.com) and is partners with Col. Dennis Behrens at Expedition Adventures (expedition-adventures.com).

CITADEL, the bowhunter's tower stand!

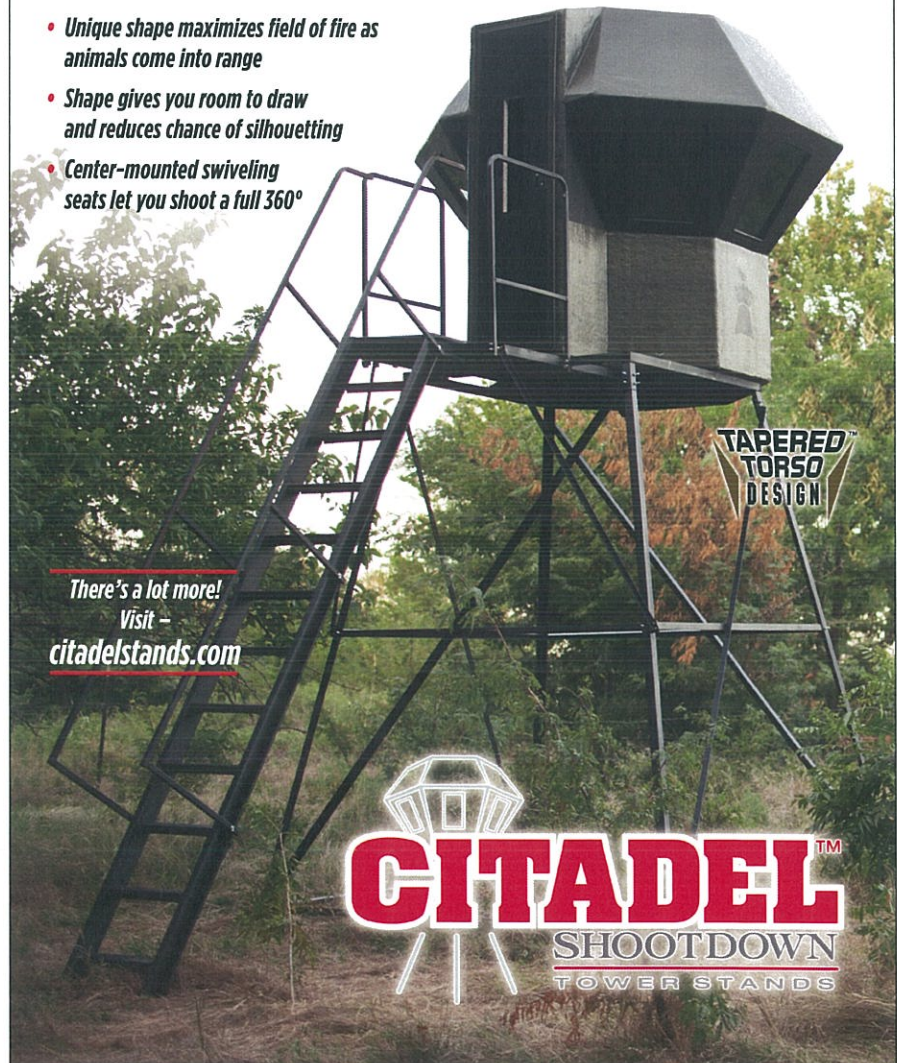
Revolutionary
"Shootdown"
Shape...



...lets you shoot down at nearby game

- Unique shape maximizes field of fire as animals come into range
- Shape gives you room to draw and reduces chance of silhouetting
- Center-mounted swiveling seats let you shoot a full 360°

There's a lot more!
Visit -
citadelstands.com



TAPERED
TORSO
DESIGN

CITADELTM
SHOOTDOWN
TOWER STANDS