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JOE AUSTELL SMALL Editor
W. L. THOMPSON Managing Editor

ADVERTISING REPRESENTATIVES

J. H. LACKEY, S. R. SHEPPARD
20 E. Jackson Blvd. Austin, Texas
Chicago, Ill. Traveling Representative
J. W. Greely & Associates
Lloyd Building
Seattle, Washington

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

Archibald Rutledge Robert Page Lincoln
Monroe H. Goode Jas. C. Foster, Jr.
L. S. Caine Harold Wales
Lee G. Crutchfield, Jr. Guy W. von Schrittz
S. Omar Barker Carlos Vinson

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Strange Tropic Deer

White Deer in the Guianan Jungles

By Richard Halli

TRUTH is stranger than fiction! Explorers and travelers to the lost places of the earth hesitate to discuss some of the things they have seen, for fear they will be set down as fabricators of tall tales. Carveth Wells, the celebrated British explorer who spent six years in the Malay jungles, debated for months the wisdom of writing down his experiences for public consumption, for fear that the veracity of his statements would be challenged, not alone by the lay reader but by many explorers who had visited much the same country as he.

When Scott Williams and I discovered a small herd of pure white deer, as large in body as the Mexican white-tails, in the vine-bound jungles of Dutch Guiana, we were inclined to doubt not only our eyes but our sanity as well, and were it not for the half-dozen photographs reclining in a rosewood box before me here now, of these deer, I might almost imagine that the heat and the maddening sting of gnats and mosquitoes had driven our minds to flights of fancy that afternoon long ago.

our evidence. That day we saw a half-dozen more of these strange animals, browsing in the glade below us. Most of them were does, but we did see at least one big buck. His antlers were shaped like those of the European fallow buck, flat and broad. As a matter of fact, the whole lot of them looked like fallow deer. But we were in South America! You explain it.

I snapped as many pictures of them as possible, then settled down to watch their activities. The more I looked at them the stronger grew the conviction that they were fallows, and I still think so. The thousand-and-one questions that surged through my mind that day are still unanswered. Maybe the early Dutch colonists imported a number of their ancestors, which escaped and fled to the cover of the jungles, propagating there till this day.

Scott tried a long, difficult shot at a doe, but missed, and the whole lot of them fled into the thicket. We never saw them again. Someday I am going back to Guiana; then mayhap I'll find the answers to my questions!

—SS—



White deer in the jungles of Dutch Guiana.

We were in a region of almost supernatural beauty, hacking and fighting a path through a dense barrier of vines and creepers, with great purple trees growing from a carpet of brown, rotted timber and clad in a gorgeous vestment of wild orchids, towering far above us. The jungle was hot, fetid, ovenlike. Suddenly we saw them. Three white does slipped almost noiselessly through the forest ahead of us, not, apparently, very much disturbed.

SCOTT and I halted the labors of our machetes, looked at each other. I am certain that the sudden appearance of Deanna Durbin in that tangled swamp could have been no more surprising. Deer, small, brown specimens inhabiting the region, had sometimes been included in our menu, but big, pure white deer—it was a mirage, the figmentation of jungle-warped imaginations!

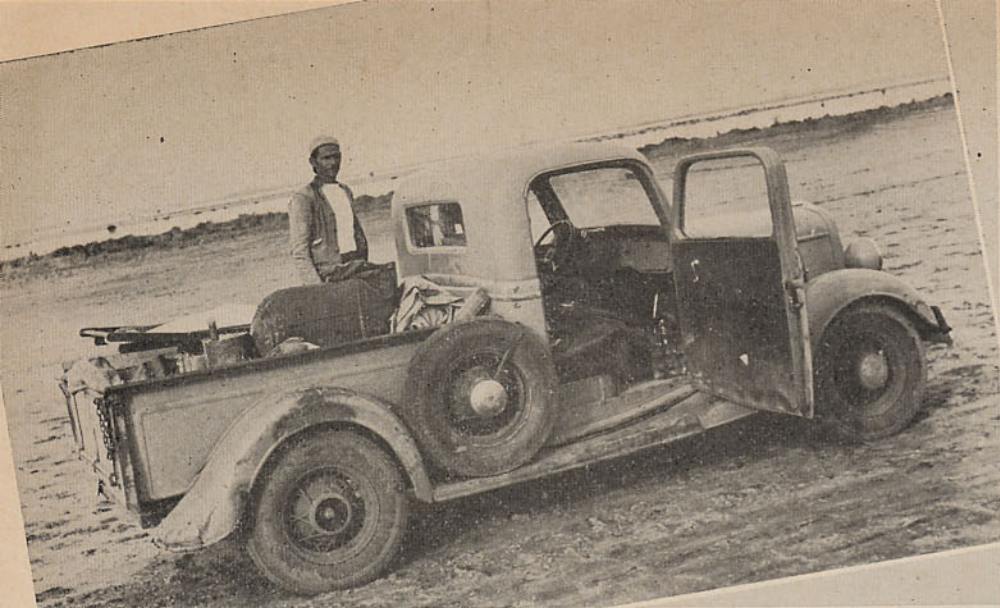
It was the following day, however, when we had emerged through an opening in the forest wall, along a plateau, that we obtained conclusive proof of

Conservationists in Arizona are building a five-mile pipe line to bring water to the buffalo in Houserock Valley, located about fifteen miles north of the Grand Canyon of the Colorado. This line will furnish a badly needed supply for the only herd of buffalo on Federal-owned lands which still provides periodic public hunting.

To keep the numbers within forage capacity and avoid competition with the cattle also grazing in the valley, hunters are allowed an open season each year to cull out some of the older bulls.

—SS—

A few years ago so many hundreds of thousands of sharks infested the waters of the Timor Sea, northwest of Australia, that an extensive war to clean them out was organized. British, Dutch, and Portuguese gunboats, using seaplanes and marine and air torpedoes, took part in the battle to drive the sea tigers permanently from their breeding grounds. Forty-six rajahs of Timor Island joined in the hunt.



Left: Standard equipment for Yaqui coast country. Your car will do but is apt to get "hung up" on high centers. Over the salt marsh in the background the author witnessed ducks in flight by the tens of thousands. Right: Carl Molling, Mexican Tourist Relations representative from Tucson, with a one-hour's bag of coast ducks shot from a blind on the bar in center background.

SMOKED sun glasses for duck shooting! What a laugh to hunters who have been accustomed to tearing off in a car filled with anti-freeze to blinds where in the frosty dawn they adjust earflaps and sit down to chatter their teeth until shooting time.

Shooting time, did I say? They never heard of it here in Mexico. Duck weather? Sun weather is duck weather in Mexico. If there's rain or wind, you stay home.

An ice-cold bottle of soda pop would have made the set-up utterly Utopian that day of my initial hunt on the Yaqui Coast. I licked my lips at the thought and took a pull of lukewarm water from the canteen. I was actually sweating. Lifting my broad-brimmed sombrero, I ran a bandana across my moist brow.

It was warm in the sun and I was drowsy. I relived those early morning moments of glory—whether awake and thinking or asleep and dreaming I'll never know. . . .

It was early morning in the Mexican duck country. The sky brightened, a slight Gulf breeze stiffened, thousands of duck voices rose to higher crescendo. Cries of those birds discorided the air for miles. As I settled into my blind, I marveled that this noise came from birds I was going to shoot rather than from the cages of tropic birds in the Memphis Zoo. I fed a pair of 6's into my double.

Wings whistled through the air above me! But my shotgun breech snapped shut too late for action. I dumped the other twenty-three shells from the box into a pocket of the light hunting coat I was wearing over a sleeveless shirt.

More wings whistled! I glanced up, swung the twin shotgun barrels across a meteor of feathers, and . . .

WHAM! WHAM! That faint black shadow collapsed under the second barrel and rocketed out of a faint pre-dawn sky to slap the water most appropriately. It was barely light enough for me to watch concentric circles spread outward on the glassy tidal lagoon water from the fallen feathered form.

The ejectors vomited empty twin hulls onto the mud bar behind my sparsely camouflaged blind. A flock of teal whipped by and was gone before I knew they were near. I resolved to be more on the alert.

A sudden HSST from my Mexican boy drew my eyes sidewise to a pair of black ducks racing along the mud bar toward me. Midway they veered slightly, leaving a left cross wide open—my one deadly forte.

The rear flier tumbled under my first

barrel and skittered across the water. The left barrel downed the second duck which, on splashing into the water, began to swim in aimless circles just beyond gun range.

I watched the swimming duck and was startled by a vigorous poke from behind. Over and behind Tadpole, my Mexican boy, was silhouetted a flock of sprigs against the sky. They passed and flew straight away as I looked down the barrels, sighting slightly underneath for each shot.

One sprig hit the water in a tailspin. Another wavered in the air and glided to a safe landing well outside gun range. Later we were able to get within shooting distance and finish off this winged bird.

"Bueno," cried Tadpole, dashing eagerly out into the water at my suggestion to pick up the dead ducks floating quietly there.

It was now rapidly becoming light. The sun smiled red into a clear sky as it surmounted a distant eastern mountain range. The sky was cloudless. I shifted on my shell case seat to survey my newly unveiled surroundings—when I arrived the night was just past and dusk lingered thick enough to obscure a passing duck unless it flew against the eastern sky where day was waking.

MY blind was on a bar perhaps a half mile from the water flat shore to the east. The low subtropic coast bristled with pitaya cacti standing like outstretched tentacles of petrified octypi. On the wide beach of hard sand between the cacti forest and the lagoon the faded orange pick-up truck, containing camping equipment, food, water kegs and tent, was parked. Far down the beach at a tide inlet was my hunting compadre, José, and his ancient double.

The flat lagoon was proportioned in miles. At no place was the water above the tightly rolled pantlegs of my human retriever, but as I watched Tadpole gather in the ducks, he slipped on the sick bottom for a brief immersion. The entire lagoon was wadable, 'way out to the low *tombolo* bar which lay three miles distant from my blind. On the other side the *tombolo* breakers washed in from the California Gulf itself, which stretched away interminably to the forlorn and little known thumb of our continent—Baja California peninsula.

Tadpole was back now with the ducks. The wounded duck swimming in circles had suddenly, after strenuous flight, gone into convulsions and after sporadic gyrations on the water turned keel up.

Sun Goggles

By Rob F.

Down on the Yaqui Coast in Mexico full swing and the weather should be sunshine!

Seven sprigs headed in toward my bar and then wheeled away just before winging within shot range. With better light, we had to crouch lower to stay unseen.

Out toward the *tombolo* where the water had been blacked with ducks, dark clouds of waterfowl a half mile long maneuvered. They turned the sky dark gray when flying crosswise to us, light gray when they flew to or from us. Large flocks of brant and geese flew high above us, the brant floating awkwardly and uttering their coarse, peculiarly far-carrying call, the geese wedging swiftly across the sky with more refined honks.

A lone black duck crossed my point, headed out to sea. Rising to a stoop, I

Tadpole, my human retriever, also attends to picking and dressing the ducks. Note large average size of these Obregon ducks.





Left: My sparse blind at the end of a bar. Tadpole is elated to pose with the shotgun. Right: Tadpole wades for a wounded sprig. The lagoon is shallow—you may wade over it at any point without wetting your pants pocket.

Ducks

Sanderson

the duck season is just getting into just right — warm, with generous

brought him down with a swift cross swing and he somersaulted into the water. Tadpole jerked my coat. Turning I saw a score or more of sprig veering from newly discovered peril. Since they were hardly within range when I pulled the trigger, the shot had no effect.

Three more flocks passed my bar blind. I was lucky to down four birds with my six shots. Then it seemed my run of luck passed. I missed three straight shots — none difficult. For a quarter hour interlude not a bird passed within firing range.

I looked through the clear air into the distance eastward—thirty miles to where the serrated peaks of the sierras had two hours lain as a monstrous jagged saw against the ripening dawn. North and

Shotgun shells are expensive. This young lad and his .22 are all the local competition I had while hunting on the Yaqui.



south I looked, to where the shore dwindled to a thin hair and flattened into the Gulf. West beyond the flying masses of confetti-like waterfowl was the infinity of salty sky above sea.

The sun was warm. I yearned to remove my dun-colored hunting jacket, a move which would have been fatal to my camouflage. It was then that, shooting southeast into Apollo's brilliant smile, I slipped on a pair of sunglasses!

By mid-morning the ducks were coming over in small wedges. No more big flocks came—the birds flew in pairs, sevens, and small groups. Most of them passed just beyond the forty-yard line.

As the day matured, the shooting slackened. At ten o'clock I tired of waiting for stragglers. Tadpole gathered in the last armful of ducks, and awkwardly festooned with the morning bag, we headed for the truck.

Between bites of lunch we counted ducks aloud. Twenty-seven in my collection. Not bad for a warm morning, a bright sun, a cloudless sky, and barely a breath of breeze!

With equal luck in the evening, I'd easily fill my daily limit of fifty ducks if I cared to. But I planned instead to hunt inland for quail.

DUCK hunter's haven, this country south of the border? You may easily call it such, this oasis in the desert coast where the Rio Yaqui tumbles out of the mountains onto the coast plain where it dignifiedly meanders through and nurtures rich irrigated rice fields before sliding into the Gulf.

This waterfowl riviera is the first abundant fresh water and food in over three hundred miles of desert stretching northward. Mexico lacks inland lakes and streams suited to ducks so the Obregon country with the mountain-fed fresh Yaqui and half a million acres of irrigated grain fields is the winter resting and feeding grounds for all the West Coast and Rocky Mountain flyway ducks.

A lush carpet of green rice fields, this fertile valley appears with the suddenness of an apparition as you emerge from the cacti and brush jungles of the Yaqui Coast. The Yaqui Delta is to duckdom what a combination of Miami, Guaymas, and Polynesia is to American tourists.

The region's popularity with waterfowl remains undiminished despite bag limits of fifty ducks and fifteen geese per day and the long shooting seasons from November 16 to March 15 on ducks, and November 1 to January 31 on geese. A very small but rapidly growing group of U. S. nimrods visit this winter hunting ground.

The inadequately armed Mexican populace deigns not to waste precious ammunition on the lowly duck. In consequence, the ducks here gain an assurance which, when compared to northern ducks, makes one think immediately of the city sparrow compared to the country sparrow.

My Yaqui duck trip all started when Carl Molling, Mexican Tourist Relations agent at Tucson, was making out my hunting papers prior to my last expedition into Sonora last winter. I lamented the close of the deer season on February 15, the near future.

"Why not try ducks?" Carl suggested, showing me some duck pictures that almost turned my arm black and blue. "I'm going down to Obregon to shoot some myself—come on down when you get your deer hung up."

Down the coast highway to Obregon is 350 miles from Tucson. As far as Guaymas the road is graded and maintained, but from there on 84 miles is "self-maintaining." I was a bit hesitant about taking my low-slung sedan over this road. Barring rainy weather, I found the road very passable. Leaving Guaymas after lunch, I arrived without mishap.

It was dusk. I met Carl and his party coming in, bristling all over with ducks. Carl makes the trip one of his yearly "musts," but this trip was in a class by itself because Carl, Jr., was there with a 20-gauge three-shot auto just suited to his young 'teens. Next day Carl saw to it that I hunted from the blind he had used the day before, and I found the shooting so intoxicating that I remained in Obregon long after I bade farewell to the two Carls, their friends and huge crates of iced ducks, as they boarded the air-conditioned Southern Pacific pullman for the land of the closed season.

THOSE sunny days of latter February were certainly great, bombarding those fat, rice-fed Yaqui ducks. From dawn until breakfast each morning I hunted, and if I had a few extra shells, I'd putter around in the cacti for quail. Then I'd take a sunbath in the afternoon on the beach to work out the lumbago I'd acquired from years of sitting sodden in a low-country blind while a piercing wind gusted through my attire and my carcass shook like an aspen leaf.

This was all new to me—hunting ducks in the sunshine with no rain, no wind, no blustery weather that sends winter-togged U. S. sportsmen to the blinds. But the best part of it was that, almost two months after my home season had closed

(Continued on Page 32)

The Opossum -- Menace to Game?

By Carlos Vinson

THE OPOSSUM is a sporting and fur-bearing animal that receives little of the comment and attention that it deserves. True enough, the opossum often makes quite a pest of himself in the poultry yard, as he is a great lover of young chickens and other tame fowl when hard-pressed for food; however, the more modernized poultry yards have practically shut out the opossum, as well as other predators, and his poultry depredations can no longer be charged against him to any great extent.

There are those who class the opossum as a great enemy to upland game. I do not agree with this. True enough, the opossum will eat anything that crawls, flies, walks, or swims (except a skunk), but he is far too clumsy and slow-motioned to do any damage of great importance to upland game. The only birds or animals he consumes are the very young or wounded adults, and then it is those that he happens across during his search for wild fruits. The opossum does not hunt especially for game as do some of our other fur-bearers. What game he gets is more or less accidental.

The opossum furnishes sport, food and profit for many southern farm boys and darkies. There are more sportsmen who enjoy an occasional night of opossum hunting with well-trained dogs than one might think. Frankly, I enjoy hunting them myself. In my estimation, the opossum is a worthy game animal.

The ruddy-faced youth who pursues the opossum with his cur dog does it because it is great sport to him and also because it furnishes him with a few extra nickels for candy, firecrackers, and gum.



The old southern darkey, with his flickering lantern and any sort of dog, pursues the opossum because he enjoys the sport to the fullest extent, and at the same time it supplies his table with meat. It is traditional with the southern darkies to hunt opossum as their "number one" sport and to feast on roast 'possum with sweet 'taters. The average sportsman who indulges in this sport does it because he actually enjoys hunting opossums occasionally. Personally, I do not care for opossum meat. However, I will say that it is a cleaner animal, as far as eating habits are concerned, than the hog whose hams we rave over.

I BELIEVE that the best dog for opossum hunting is the common old cur. At least, I have had better success with this sort of dog. A mixture of bird dog, fox terrier, hound, and collie makes about as good an opossum dog as one can find.

Opossums are like all other game. We will have to look out for their welfare if we expect to keep them with us. They den and raise their

young in hollow trees and logs more than any other place. If we do away with their natural abodes, some few of them will take to old clay roots and other such places, but their number will be lessened.

Favorite foods of the opossum are persimmons, wild grapes, pokeberries, and papaws. Fence-rows grow these fruits to perfection. These are natural foods for other game, too.

Give the little fellow a break. Let's quit blaming him for everything from the death of our best milk cow to the forthcoming (we believe) inflation. Old 'possum's all right!

AMONG THE HICKORIES

(Continued from Page 31)

deer would not drink muddy water, but that one did. No buck trailed her, however, and I went to camp at eleven, to be followed shortly by Fred.

WE were preparing dinner, after cleaning our guns, when a rifle shot rang out. Jim had let Oscar use his .38. I told Fred that was Oscar at the water hole. Then there was a second and a third shot. Fred concluded the kid had wounded a deer and needed his help. Such was the case, for forty minutes later I heard them coming in. Oscar came into camp with a three-point buck on his shoulder. Was he proud! He could outstrut a peacock. The boy had a story for his girl now. That's his buck in the picture, with him and his dad proudly sitting in the background as I snapped the picture. And what meat! It's all in the bleeding of a buck, the immediate dressing, and the early removal to cold storage, if the weather is warm, that makes for good deer meat. It was like tender veal. My ham roast was perfect with candied yams.

Last year I had my eight-pointer twenty minutes after daylight the first day, just three hundred yards south of camp. This time I missed out altogether.

Well, all good things must end. It was a sad dinner that Sunday, for we broke camp shortly thereafter and came in after a successful and very enjoyable hunt in the hickory-covered hills. Quail and squirrels will give us some entertainment between deer seasons, and too, Jim and I will do a little Sunday morning deer hunting until that sad day when the season will close.

You see—we take our deer hunting seriously!

ss

WHAT! ANOTHER MENACE?

(Continued from Page 17)

walk through the lobby of his hotel after nine o'clock at night.

The pitiful part about this whole affair is that scientists and doctors have never discovered any vaccine or drug that will offset this disease or even ease the pressure. Doctors are helpless in attending to these victims. I have found that many doctors have this disease themselves and

can do nothing about it. When patients go to see doctors who are fellow sufferers of this malady, they go into a huddle and one tries to outdo the other in long, colorful conversation, and the patient is in a worse condition at the end of the treatment than he was before seeing a doctor.

As I stated, there is no cure, and the only relief from this suffering is lots of fresh air, especially around lakes and mountains where fish and game are plentiful.

I, for one, have not had this disease in years. It doesn't worry me because I don't talk and write about hunting and fishing like others do.

Sure is stuffy in here. I feel uncomfortable. Believe my blood pressure is going up. I'd better call my doctor and see what he thinks. I did. He said to go into the hill country for a rest.

Quail season is open up there now. Boy! Do I remember a hunt I took in those hills some years ago. I'll just sort of take my shotgun along and . . . and . . .

Move over, boys—I've got it again!

ss

SUN-GOGGLE DUCKS

(Continued from Page 11)

on December 31, I was able to enjoy waterfowl shooting deluxe.

How to do it? All arrangements can be made through the Mexican Tourist Relations Bureau in Tucson, Arizona. Previous correspondence will have all necessary papers in order so that you and your firearms will cross at Nogales without delay or confusion. Once in Mexico, living is reasonable, as the favorable exchange ratio gives you nearly five pesos for a single American one-spot. In Oregon, a genial American-born Harvard man named Carol Kibbey takes all *Americanos* under his wing and is full of authentic counsel on all subjects from finding the ducks to putting them in cold storage.

So if you're an incurable of the kind who has to disguise the fireside rocker to look like a duck blind so you'll feel at home, drop down to Obregon for a couple of weeks' shooting in January, February, or early March. No more winters idly tinkering with your decoys or testing calls—try some real action below the border!



Winter fishing in the South! Picture taken in December shows Gene McCalmont at Port Aransas, Texas, with nice string of "specks."