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It's time to start planning for that fall teal hunting trip

By Luke Clayton

The bean counters tell us the economy is still in a slump, but if you were in attendance at the Texas Trophy Hunters show this past weekend in Fort Worth, you'll probably agree that when it comes to hunting and the outdoors in general, we're living in the boon years!

The aisles at the show were packed with folks, all eager to visit with outfitters, plan hunts and purchase the latest in hunting gear. If you were anywhere around booth No. 313, where Mike and Lori Ford were set up, introducing their Rio Rojo Rancho in Red River County to the masses, you might have experienced somewhat of a delay. Ford had one of the new GhostBlinds (www.ghostblind.com) set up and the innovative new mirror blind drew quiet a crowd. The blind has a series of panels, mirrors on the outside and camo inside, with backpack straps and weighs less than 20 pounds. Game approaching the blind sees a reflection of exactly what's in front of the blind, finally the perfect camo!

Karl Harmon, the inventor of the Feedlite, a unit used to illuminate the area around feeders for hunting hogs at night, has come up with another very useful product, The Remote (www.the-remote.com).

This unit works on any spin-type game feeder and remotely activates the spinner. Its range is up to 175 yards and uses only 1/3 mA, which does not drain the feeder battery.

How many times have you been setting in your stand, wishing you had a bit more corn on the ground? Now, with the push of a button, you can remotely activate your feeder!

If you enjoy predator hunting, you will love watching "Ultimate Predator" (www.UltimatePredatorTV.com) a new DVD by Chris Robinson and his pro staff.

Check out the web site to see a preview of the video. The footage highlights more than 40 night hunts for bobcat, coyote and ringtail and also contains the best footage of night predator hunting that I've ever seen.

While walking the aisles, I was pleasantly surprised to see that one of my longtime favorite hunting ranches, Squaw Mountain Whitetails (www.starbuckwhitetails.com), located north of Jacksboro, is once again a hunting ranch. More than 20 years ago, when I was beginning my career as an outdoors writer, I hunted the ranch on many occasions. The ranch was used for private hunting for many years until the Wieser Brothers purchased it and once again opened the gates to this storied old ranch to the public. I'm looking forward to once again having the opportunity to visit the rugged hills where I taught my older son to hunt.

TEAL HUNTING TIPS — Teal season opens in mid-September and it's time to think ahead and plan our hunts. Teal are the easiest of ducks to decoy, the trick to hunting them is scouting and locating areas where the migrating birds stop to rest for a few days in their migrations. Teal are notorious for being here today and gone tomorrow. To be effective, scouting should take place the day before one plans to hunt. In years past, I've scouted a marsh or shallows on a remote lake or pond and found good numbers of birds, only to return a week later and discover they have moved out.

If possible, do your scouting the day before your hunt and disturb the birds as little as possible. Some hunters use only teal decoys but I've had good success with standard mallard decoys, the same ones I use during the general duck season.

Shovelers also migrate early and are often mistaken for teal. Since only teal can be harvested during the special early season, learning to identify the species is a must. The Ducks Unlimited web site www.ducks.org, has a section "Duck ID," that is very helpful in learning how to identify the various species.

The best time to hunt teal over decoys is during the first hour or so of daylight. Calling is not a must but I have had success using the blue wing teal whistle that does a good job imitating the "peep-peep" sound made by the birds in flight. I seldom hunt with more than a dozen decoys during teal season. It's important to go light and remain mobile when hunting teal. Teal are considered the best tasting of all ducks and they

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