

Whitetails and Dreams

By William Webb, Jr.

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The Whitetail Pro Guide and Management School

In late January 2006, The Colorado Outdoor Adventure Guide School inaugurated a new class and program in their curriculum for providing education to the outdoor recreation industry. It marked the first time any COAGS course would be offered in any location other than the Gold Camp Ranch. Two of south Texas's premier whitetail ranches, the Double Dime and Perlitz, opened their gates for the students wanting to become guides in the whitetail industry or those wanting to get a better understanding of whitetail deer management.

The whitetail deer is the most hunted big game species in North America, and rightly so; as whitetails are the most abundant game animal, numbering over thirty-six million deer throughout the United States, Canada, and Mexico. COAGS President, Gary Jordan, saw the need to provide qualified guides and more educated outdoorsmen for this growing industry. He contacted Paul Johnson, owner of Vinegaroon Wildlife outside of Del Rio, Texas. Paul, too, had the insight and suggested that Gary contact Jimmy Perlitz and Larry Jones, with the Double Dime and Perlitz Ranches. With the growing interest in the whitetail guide school, two classes are now offered in Colorado on the Gold Camp Ranch. Each class location offers a little something different. The Texas ranches, located outside of Carrizo Springs, offer world class accommodations and whitetails. The Gold Camp Ranch, located a few miles from Cripple Creek, Colorado, offers mountain majesty and generally cooler temperatures. The same curriculum is taught at all the campuses.

The first three classes, taught in February and early March, are held at the Double Dime Ranch. Chipper Jones, the Atlanta Braves third baseman, owns this 10,000 acre south Texas ranch and his father Larry administers the day to day activities. Larry, along with his staff, is very cordial answering any questions presented by the students and staff. The accommodations are incredible with spacious rooms, a pool table, and leather couches for watching movies, hunting videos, and etc. They have washers and driers on site and "catch and release fishing" right outside the main lodge.

The Perlitz is owned and operated by Jimmy Perlitz. The Perlitz has been known to produce some incredible whitetails. Both "Monster Bucks" and "Hunting the Country" have filmed shows at the Perlitz. Jimmy too has wonderful facilities. The bunk house is very large with a crow's nest that overlooks his ranch. Students can play poker, foosball, or enjoy the firing range and sporting clays with the staff's supervision. Like Larry Jones, Jimmy, too, is very cordial answering any questions the students ask.

The final location for the whitetail instruction is COAGS's very own Gold Camp Ranch. The accommodations are somewhat rustic, but the mountain vistas are worth the trip. No Whitetails are present at 10,000 feet but opportunities are present for sighting elk, mule deer, and bears. Classes in Colorado are held in August and late September. Late September is a magical time in the Rocky Mountains. The aspens change colors turning the green mountain sides into bright reds, yellow, and orange, and the mighty Rocky Mountain elks' bugling is as sweet as the sound of a church choir.

South Texas and Colorado offer different facilities, sights, and experiences, yet the staff teaches the same information at all locations. The only differences are the different landscapes each has to offer and the guest speakers.

The COAGS staff is primarily the same in Texas and Colorado; however the guest speakers will vary from each geographical location. In Texas, Larry Jones and Jimmy Perlitz provide two philosophies on management and open their ranches to the COAGS whitetail students. The management practices the Double Dime and Perlitz ranches follow allows students to study a working south Texas whitetail operation. Al Brothers is known as the godfather of Quality Deer Management. He has spent the last fifty years managing whitetail deer throughout Texas and the southeast. A graduate of Texas A. & M., Al's education in "whitetail management" came from years of trial and error. He is a renowned author and has a wealth of knowledge. In the 2006 classes in Texas, Dr. Jim Cathy lectured students with more scientific knowledge. Dr. Cathy received his Doctorate in Wildlife Biology at Texas Tech. He has worked extensively with genetics and other scientific research on whitetail, mule deer and sheep. Dr. Cathy and Al Bothers give students two different schools of thought pertaining to whitetail deer.

Two of the other guest speakers, "Mr. Whitetail" Larry Wieshuin and Judd Cuney, are more well-known in the Whitetail Industry. As his schedule allows, Larry Wieshuin visits classes talking with student about the many different aspects of the whitetail and outdoor industry. Larry's background in outdoor writing and television offers students a broader spectrum of opportunities that lay ahead of them. Judd Cooney, another outdoor writer, is an outfitter in Iowa. He joins the Colorado classes speaking to students on being versatile in the whitetail industry. He has written several books on archery hunting and allows students to ask questions to a current outfitter.

The Whitetail Pro Guide and Management School offers more than just subjects related to whitetail deer. The instruction provided at whitetail guide school teaches students to become better outdoorsmen and more diversified employees in the whitetail hunting industry. Courses like camp cooking, wilderness survival, land navigation, and attitude and leadership are covered during the two week course. Students also learned how to start their own business, become First Aid and CPR qualified, and learn to use outdoor writing, photography, and videography, to record their experiences to perpetuate themselves in an outdoor career. One or all of these subjects can in themselves open the doors to opportunities in the outdoor recreation industry.

The main focus of whitetail pro guide is whitetail deer; however turkeys and upland birds seem to go hand in hand with this industry. Thus time is spent learning habitat and hunting techniques for dove, quail, and turkeys. Students learn of the many species and sub-species of each game bird, and some of the management practices and food plots tactics pertaining to each game bird.

The heart of the Whitetail Pro Guide and Management School is North America's mostly widely hunted and beloved wild game, *Odocoileus virginianus* or White-tailed Deer. The first day of classes students learn the opportunities that lay before them in the whitetail and outdoor industry. Students learn to properly score antlers according to the Boone & Crockett guidelines. Learning to score provides the foundation students need to score deer in the wild or "on the hoof". Students spend many hours looking at pictures and video tape of whitetail bucks. These pictures and videos allows student to hone their field judging skills. Whitetail students learn to age deer by dentine wear and the tell-tale signs of aging detected on the hoof. Aspiring guides learn field care and capping of a harvested game as well as meat procurement. The most important aspect of whitetail deer COAGS students will learn is MANAGEMENT.

Conservationists have succeeded in re-establishing the population of whitetail deer. From less than five hundred thousand deer in 1900, to nearly thirty-six million today, that job is done. Now it is time for our focus to turn to managing this abundant game species. One of the reasons COAGS set up campuses in Texas was the focus on management. Texas is leading the country with it research and state funded management programs. With the help of pioneers like the Al Brothers and the more scientific approaches of the Dr. Jim Cathy's, Texas's whitetail deer population and hunting industry provides a blue print for the rest of North America.

The Whitetail Pro Guide and Management School allows students a hands-on study of whitetail deer management. The staff provides information on correct habitat and improvements, food plots, and supplemental feeding. Students learn proper buck to doe ratios and the balance of nature; predators and poor range conditions. Other management practices such as identification of co harts; the differences among trophy management, quality management, and sustain yield management; and the importance of age in a whitetail operation are also major points covered during the two week vocational school.

With the incredible rebound of the whitetail deer, conservation should be applauded for the efforts taken to preserve this magnificent natural resource, however, now is the time to turn from conserving whitetail deer to managing these abundant creatures. If you spend your days dreaming of guiding sportsmen in the pursuit of this North American big game species or want to become better outdoorsman and manage your own herd, then learn from The Colorado Outdoor Adventure Guide School's staff by becoming a student in the Whitetail Pro Guide and Management School. More information and class schedules can be found at www.guideschool.com or call 1-800-714-4864.