

Whitetail 101

WHEN SOMEONE MENTIONS VOCATIONAL SCHOOL WHAT COMES TO MIND? OIL STAINED SHOP FLOORS, METAL, WOOD, POWER TOOLS, AND OF COURSE IMPATIENT SHOP TEACHERS. OR MAYBE VISIONS ABOUT WHITETAIL DEER HUNTING, SURVIVAL, CAMP COOKING, SHOOTING, SOUTHWEST TEXAS, AND THE COLORADO ROCKIES, OR AN INSTRUCTOR AS PUMPED UP AS YOU ARE. NO I'M NOT FORCING THE IMAGINATION HERE; I'M TALKING ABOUT THE **WHITETAIL PRO GUIDE PROGRAM.** BY MARK OLIS

The author **Mark Olis** is the Associate Editor for both the **Hunting Camp Journal** and **Predator & Prey** magazines. Mark visited the school in progress in March 2006 at the Perlitz Ranch in southwest Texas.

The Whitetail Pro Guide Program of the Colorado Outdoor Adventure Guide School (COAGS) is a certified vocational school designed to train individuals on how to be a professional guide. You can even earn college credit at certain universities around the nation through this program.

The Whitetail Guide Program just completed its first year of classes this fall with 75 students. The program lasts for two weeks with weekends off and when a student graduates they will have completed 100 hours of class time-half classroom half outdoors and will receive help in job placement.

What kind of curriculum does a whitetail guide school offer?

- **Ten hours class time designated to whitetail nutrition, genetics, management and conservation.**

- **Ten hours evaluating, field judging and scoring whitetails.**
- **Ten hours devoted to hunting and scouting techniques or eight hours of class to learn big game hunting, field dressing care, caping and taxidermy concerns.**
- **Eight hours of class allocated for first aid and CPR.**
- **Other topics covered are career opportunities, professional guide equipment, hunting stand placement, upland birds, wilderness survival, orienteering, Dutch oven cooking, shooting and safety, outdoor photography, starting your own business and probably stressed the most was the importance of good people skills.**

This in-depth program didn't just spring up overnight.

It's not easy putting together a licensed vocational school, you don't just think of it today and

start it tomorrow. It's a year of paper work nightmare and bureaucratic red tape getting approved by the state (Colorado and Texas).

COAGS has been running strong for 14 years.

The whitetail program came about after hearing the word whitetail over and over throughout the industry.

It's by far the biggest hunting market in North America. As we got to exploring the numbers we realized how much larger the whitetail market is compared to the western hunting market.

In late January 2006, students began to arrive at the famed Perlitz Ranch in the brush country of Southwest Texas, just outside of Carrizo Springs.

By the end of April, four other classes were completed at the Perlitz Ranch and the Double Dime Ranch. Then as the South Texas sun cranks up the temperature in late spring, the school saddles up and heads northwest by about 1,000 miles to the high country of Colorado. Classes start up again in May at the COAGS headquarters.

It's not all fun and games though. Students are up before daylight cooking breakfast for about 20 folks. Just like a real

guide. Each night after a full day of classes and dinner the students are required to read two chapters from "Evaluating and Observing Whitetails" by Dave Richards and Al Brothers.

Just like conventional school, there is a test each morning covering the chapters and there are subsequent tests throughout the day on various topics. The student's grade comes from a combination of test scores and achievements in the field and during competition courses.

Competitions include antler scoring, orienteering, shooting (shotgun, rifle and archery), starting a fire without a match, building an emergency shelter, and more importantly, camp cooking competitions.

The competitions get the guys excited and energized, it helps them develop their A game.

By the way, don't get the idea that these students are all young bucks fresh out of high school. While I was at the Perlitz Ranch visiting with the guide school there was a student named Earl Boyette. Earl was a grey bearded fellow from East Texas who served our nation in the Vietnam War.

"Hunting is more to me; it's about getting in touch with God our creator", says Earl. "I'm interested in being a guide and getting to know other people".

The best part of the Whitetail Pro Guide Program is even if you

don't want to be a guide you can benefit from the class.

I would say two-thirds of the students so far want to be actual guides, the other third come for self improvement.

Hunting clubs could send one guy for a two week course and he could come back with more management, genetics, habitat improvement and whitetail know-how than any one person could ever obtain in that amount of time.

For anyone interested in becoming a whitetail guide, better whitetail hunter, or to gain a well rounded and in-depth knowledge about whitetail deer then this course is for you. This program is certified by the state of Colorado and Texas.

For complete details about The Whitetail Pro Guide Program, COAGS and the 2007 class schedule, go to www.guideschool.com or give them a call at 800-714-4864 e-mail contact at customer-service@guideschool.com .

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