

# A&M prof reports Texas big game causing problems

University News Service

Hunting exotic big game animals has brought big income to Texas landowners, but improper stocking is now creating some big headaches, a Texas A&M wildlife specialist says.

The exotics, such as axis deer from India, are causing problems in the Edwards Plateau where some ranchers stocked the animals but aren't hunting them on a regular basis, said Dr. William Sheffield of Texas A&M's Department of Wildlife and Fisheries Sciences.

"Because there are too many animals, some of the ranges look more like rock gardens than good range land," he said.

Also, many exotic animals are escaping enclosed lands due to inadequately maintained fences. Sheffield is concerned the exotics will out-compete native game such as the white-tailed deer for food and space.

Texas ranges support about 120,000 hoofed exotics representing 94 species, with 67 percent of them living in the Edwards Plateau and 18 percent in South Texas, Sheffield said, citing the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department census. At over 38,000, the axis deer population is the largest of the exotics, followed by the blackbuck antelope, which number about 19,000. Large populations also include the nilgai antelope in South Texas with an estimated population statewide of 15,000 and the aoudad sheep, which number between 14,000 and 15,000.

"Another popular species is the sika deer from Asia — and hunters will pay anywhere from \$650 to \$1,500 to take a sika," Sheffield said. "From the standpoint of competition for food, they require delicate management, yet we really know very little about their feeding ecology."

"We do know that surplus animals should be harvested on a regular basis and many landowners aren't doing that. Their numbers should be kept within the carrying capacity of their ranges so there will be enough vegetation not only for the exotics, but also for the native game and livestock."

Sheffield said increasing demand by gourmet restaurants for exotic meats has potential as an option for harvesting surplus exotic game.

"If a dependable market for exotic meat develops, it will provide an option for handling large surpluses," Sheffield said.

Laboratory tests on the meat of nilgai, axis, sika and blackbuck indicate their meat is equivalent in moisture content, and lower in cholesterol, fat and calories than the meat of many domestic animals, he said.

Sheffield's book will contain information about the life histories of the different exotics living in Texas, their origin, their distribution and management.

"Exotics are becoming increasingly popular," he said. "If properly managed, they have the potential for increasing the value of ranch operations. Presently, however, few ranches with exotics are realizing a profit from their animals."

# Exotic wildlife center under way

Teaching facility to bring a new breed of animal to A&M

By JULIA COKER  
Reporter

White-tailed deer, javelinas, coyotes and even a lion have come to Texas A&M — some may call it a wild idea, but it is reality.

The Wildlife and Exotic Animal Center at the College of Veterinary Medicine is finally underway and ready for business.

Dr. Stephen Seager, a professor in veterinary physiology and pharmacology, initiated the project two years ago. The center will be a teaching and research facility for the care and management of wildlife.

"We want to teach our veterinary students and graduate students how to handle the medicine of these animals," Seager said, "to give students hands-on experience of working with them, and that's no easy job."

Seager said the center's objectives are to study disease and disease control, reproduction, nutrition, behavior, management and husbandry of these wild and exotic animals.

"Because there has been a huge increase in knowledge and desire to start working with wild animals," Seager said, "The students at A&M will have an advantage and really benefit from this program."

Close to \$700,000 has been raised for the center which is about a \$1.5 million project, and all funds have come from private donations, Seager said.

The John W. Mecom family donated around 400 exotic animals to A&M over two years ago. Because the veterinary school did not have the facilities needed to keep these animals, they sold the animals to an exotic animal rancher, Louis A. Waters.

Waters provided the veterinary school the "seed money" to start the center, Seager said.

And the University then allotted a 20-acre area northeast of the College of Veterinary Medicine where the center is being built.

"Because this was a whole new

concept for the veterinary school, it took a long time to get the momentum and money needed to get on with the center," Seager said.

He proposed the idea of a center to Dr. George Shelton, dean of veterinary medicine, and Dr. J.D. McCrady, professor and head of the veterinary physiology and pharmacology department.

Seager said they are keen on new ideas and the wildlife center couldn't have been built without them.

"Someone had to okay the project and lend me the time to do it," he said. "The amount of time I've been spending on the center, one might think I was a construction foreman instead of a professor."

The area A&M gave for the project has two run-down houses on the property. Six veterinary students have been reconstructing the houses.

Seager said the student's work is not only excellent but more economical.

One of the houses will be used as Seager's office and the other will be a teaching museum. About \$180,000 in trophy animals donated to the museum will allow students to work closely with various species, Seager said.

The center also will feature research labs, holding facilities, quarantine areas, a rotunda for the holding and moving of animals, clinical facilities, grazing areas, a reptile pool and an extensive open flight aviary for birds.

The center's current occupants include white-tailed deer, javelinas and coyotes. And the center will soon acquire a lion.

Dr. Duane Kraemer, professor in veterinary physiology and pharmacology, owns an African lioness, Delilah.

Now the lioness lives at Kraemer's home, but will be moved to the wildlife center as soon as her quarters are ready, Seager said.

The center soon will be getting some elk, eland and even some lla-



Photo by ANTHONY S. C...

A white-tailed deer at Texas A&M exotic animal center.

mas, Seager said. He would also like to get some exotic "hoofstock" such as oryx and antelope. He said there is a possibility the center will be getting some cheetahs.

"Cheetahs are expensive and hard to come by, but I'm not saying it's not a possibility," Seager said. "We will accept all animals donated to the center as long as they are compatible with our grouping."

"There is a great danger in getting these wild animals and we must be extremely careful. Even people get hurt by them and we only get hurt once and then they're dead."

Seager said the center will be in the biological research of native and exotic animals. He is looking forward to the future of the center and its many achievements.

# A&M prof's course heightens career awareness

By CARA JERNIGAN  
Reporter

A job is the pot of gold at the end of a college student's rainbow. But few college courses deal directly with helping a student find and secure employment after graduation.

Dr. Howard Hesby, associate professor of animal science at Texas A&M, is trying to change this situation.

Hesby is the innovator and organizer of an 11-year program at A&M that deals directly with acquainting students with the agribusiness industry and teaching skills to help student's secure employment.

Hesby has geared this program, which he calls the Animal Science Acquaintance Course, towards sophomores and juniors, but the class is open to students in any classification in any major.

"I encourage anyone to take this course," Hesby says. "Though we are designed for ag majors, the material we cover is essentially the basics for any career plan. The only aspect of the program directly related to agriculture is the speakers."

"Though we are designed for ag majors, the material we cover is essentially the basics for any career plan."

— Dr. Howard Hesby, associate professor of animal science.

Before Hesby instructs the students in the correct procedures for writing resumes and interviewing for jobs, he first tries to expose the students to job opportunities in the agribusiness world.

"I use speakers to try and get the students turned on to some specific career field and make them aware of the endless career opportunities," Hesby says. "Hopefully, by gearing this class towards sophomores and juniors, if a student likes a particular career field but is not in that curriculum, then he has time to change his major or take the needed electives."

Hesby says he tries to make his

class more like the everyday business world instead of just another class. Hesby says he tries to set a professional atmosphere by having the class meet on Wednesday evenings and by providing a catered meal.

"I also encourage the students to dress professionally," he says. "By combining the meal and the dress, I feel the students gain more confidence in a business-type situation."

Hesby says he begins the semester with a student self-analysis.

"This assessment helps a student determine if he is best suited for inside or outside work and whether he should work with others or alone," he says.

Hesby says he tries to get the students to take this assignment seriously because, he says, "You base your whole career on your likes and dislikes."

After the students have completed the self-analysis, Hesby then tries to acquaint them with the leaders in the agriculture industry.

"I try and have at least one

"It is amazing to see the students who have come out of this class in a real interview."

— Dr. Howard Hesby.

speaker per class meeting," Hesby says. "I try and bring in the role models; the people who, not so many years ago, were students at A&M and are now successes in their respective careers. I try and make the students realize that they are capable of doing the same thing."

A few weeks into the semester, Hesby requires the students to write letters of inquiry to three companies that they are interested in working for. Hesby says these letters are to acquaint the students, again, with dealing directly with business people. In order to locate the different career opportunities, Hesby says the students must become familiar with the Placement Center.

Towards the end of the semester, the students participate in mock in-

terviews with various agriculture companies. After these mock interviews, Hesby says the representatives from the companies critique the students on their performance.

"The students also have available an audio tape of their interview and they are encouraged to listen to it to understand their weaknesses and their strong points," Hesby says.

Larry Proctor, sales representative for Elanco Products Company, a participant in the mock interviews and a class speaker, says, "This is an outstanding class for students. It is a super opportunity to prepare for a career opportunity."

He says he does not know of another class or another professor that gives so much to the development of the students.

"It is amazing to see the students who have come out of this class in a real interview," he says. "They are so self-confident and knowledgeable."

He says he feels every student should take advantage of this class and of all the benefits it has to offer.

# Police follow presidential trail to make arrests

ARLINGTON — A police officer followed a trail of presidential names Monday — President Day — in order to arrest a burglary suspect, a police spokesman said.

According to Jim Willett, case began about 2:20 a.m. Officer Joe Bond was called to the scene of a burglary at 2201 Senhouser in Arlington. A stereo had been taken in the break-in, Willett said. He Bond got the name of a suspect from the victim and a witness and was told a man lived on Van Buren Street.

At the Van Buren address, officers told the officer that subject had moved to an apartment on Washington Street, spokesman said. Bond was the address and confronted suspect, Willett said.

The suspect led Bond to the street to another apartment complex — the "Lincoln Court" — where the stolen stereo was found inside a car, Willett said.

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Office hours 8:30-12:00, 1:00-4:30

No pictures will be taken at the Pavilion this year