

An Extraordinary Hunt in Caldwell Parish

by Sr. Agent Scott Watson

All too often the only news we read and see is either bad news or negative media coverage about someone or some thing. Early last December, I witnessed a hunt in Caldwell Parish that was nothing but positive, and I couldn't help but wonder why the media couldn't have been on hand to report on this very good news.

Just above Columbia in Caldwell Parish, the Army Corps of Engineers owns a prime piece of property surrounded on three sides by Riverton Lake, formerly known as Ouachita River. The 250-acre site is home to at

least 50 whitetail deer that have never been hunted, since no one is admitted onto the property. The peninsula is mostly woodland, and with so many deer, it really is a hunter's paradise.

That's exactly the thought that came to Greg Brown when he began working on an important project last fall. Brown, from Benton, La., is a volunteer with Wheelin' Sportsmen, a division of the National Wild Turkey Federation. Wheelin' Sportsmen's mission is to provide outdoor experiences for handicapped people. And that's exactly what they did last Dec. 4 and 5

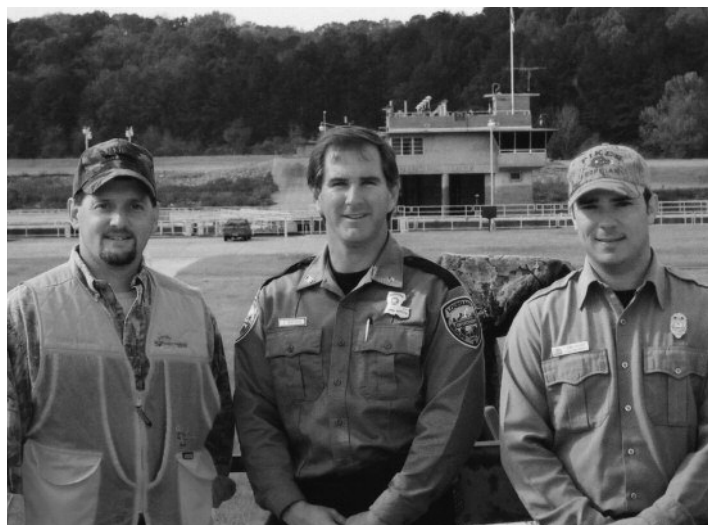
in a splendid location.

To arrange a first-ever hunt on the 250 acres at Riverton, Brown approached the Corps of Engineers and received a positive response from Corps of Engineers employees Tony Porter and Wayne Stogsdill. Without their enthusiastic support, Brown relates that the hunt would have never been possible.

Wheelin' Sportsmen then selected eight people to participate in a weekend hunt on the government property. All eight were wheelchair bound. Some had participated in Wheelin' Sportsmen-sponsored hunts and taken deer before, while others had not.

Because the property was a bit on the small side for eight hunters, it was decided that they would use muzzleloaders instead of centerfire rifles. But muzzleloaders didn't seem to be a setback at all, especially since eight deer were taken, one of which was a good eight pointer. The hunters who participated in the event were Blake Perkins of Fairhope, Ala., Carey King of Shreveport, La., Vincent

BELOW LEFT: Sr. Agent Scott Watson (center) talks with Greg Brown of Wheelin' Sportsman (left) and Tony Porter with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. **BELOW RIGHT:** Sgt. Gary Watts and hunter Mandy Atkins enjoy the lunch break.





Troxclair of Destrehan, La., Todd Corley of Malvern, Ark., Rob Watson of Beebranch, Ark., Mandy Atkins of Shreveport, La., Donald Benson of Elmgrove, La., and Charles McIntosh of Avinger, Texas.

Many, many people were involved behind the scenes to make this weekend special for the hunters and it's not possible to name them all. Certainly, Greg Brown deserves credit for getting the ball rolling on this hunt. And Tony Porter, Wayne Stogsdill and all of the many Corps of Engineers employees who were at the hunt really made

it all come together.

In addition, Caldwell Parish Sheriff Steve May provided and prepared an excellent catfish lunch for everyone who was at the hunt. Thanks also go to Ouachita Parish Sheriff Richard Fewell, who opened the parish rifle range on a closed day and allowed the hunters to sight in their muzzleloaders. Sheriff Fuell also waived the range fees for everyone.

The Holiday Inn in Monroe, La., provided rooms for all of the hunters at no charge. Last, but certainly not least, I'd like to recognize the leader

TOP: The Wheelin' Sportsmen hunt gave participants access to Riverton Lake, a pristine property owned by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The group netted eight deer during the weekend.

LEFT: Sheriff Steve May, who prepared the delicious catfish, visits with Corps of Engineers employees while the fish are grilling.

RIGHT: After a successful day, participants and organizers enjoy a picnic lunch by the water.

of our department. Secretary Dwight Landreneau of the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries waived the hunting license fees for the hunters for the weekend.

On a more personal note, I would like to thank my supervisors, Lt. Johnny Rhodes

and Capt. Johnny Ferrington, who allowed Sgt. Gary Watts and me to attend the hunt. It's not often that a person gets the opportunity to see something of the caliber of this event come together, but we were fortunate to be there for this one. 🦋