

---

## Bagging trophies with a camera

Web posted 10/14/97

By **TERRY MOORE**  
Globe-News Sports Writer

CHILDRESS - Russell Graves dons camouflage during the wee hours of the morning, stalks game for hours on end and sits still and silent for unmeasurable amounts of time with hopes of catching a glimpse of his quarry.

Come winter he gets that same itch for the outdoors as every hunter.

His weapon of choice to scratch that itch? A camera.

Graves, a 27-year-old agriculture science teacher at Childress High School, went through a natural progression as a hunter. He owned his first gun at age 10 and moved from shotguns to rifles to archery before ending up as a wildlife photographer.

"When I was 17 my brother gave me his old camera," Graves said. "I was at a point in my life when I was getting frustrated with deer hunting. We lived in a one-buck county and I was not getting it done as a hunter. I almost got bored and started shooting photos while roaming around out in the woods.

"Of course mom and dad told me my stuff was good and padded my ego. If enough people tell you something you start to believe it's good. One day I got cocky and sent some photos to Texas Parks and Wildlife. I went four miles to town to mail them and the photos almost beat me back home."

In the rejection letter from Texas Parks and Wildlife was a note from chief photographer Leroy Williamson telling what Graves needed to do to improve. He also wrote well-known photographers, asking for tips. Most took the time to answer.

Graves gathered all the tips and took them heart.

"One nice thing about photography is I can do it whenever the mood strikes me," he said. "I don't have to follow any seasons or bag limits. Humans are predators and things start stirring inside when it starts getting cold. I want to see what I can see.

"In the winter I'm hammering away and in the summer things slow down. I almost appreciate how geese feel. People that hunt can understand that. When it starts getting cooler and the velvet starts coming off the antlers I really get fired up."

Graves has had his photographs published in Texas Parks and Wildlife Magazine, Texas Sportsman, Persimmon Hill, National Cattleman, The Cattleman, Buck Masters, Outdoor Photography, Texas Trophy Hunter and Texas Highways, just to name a few.

"Some magazines will call me asking for stuff," Graves said. "That's a little funner than saying, 'Will you please use this.'"

Graves just finished an informational book titled ``Managing Wildlife as an Agricultural Enterprise." He supplied 61,000 words of text and 400 photos for the book.

Graves hunts with traditional weapons some, but is always looking to bolster his photo collection.

``I still enjoy hunting," he said. ``Now I feel like I'm behind on taking photographs. The book really wiped me out. I'm not where I need to be shooting photos."

He also takes a lot of photos of cattle.

``I just started doing it because there is a shortage of people taking pictures of cattle," Graves said. ``It's weird, but that deal has been real good for me. It's not as challenging from the standpoint of getting close to them. The challenge is to see the cow and photograph it in a different way.

``It's not like wildlife. If you take a picture of a white tail deer, and if it's big enough, the magazines will eat it up regardless."

---