

These Dogs Will Hunt ...

and point, retrieve, sit, stay, roll over and make you laugh.

Yantis, Texas, has a growing claim to fame, and it's a Huckleberry. Nope. Not the eating kind, mind you. This Huckleberry is of the canine variety—it's a 3-year-old Jack Russell terrier. Huckleberry lives with his people, Billy and Kathryn Burnett, and he works and plays alongside them each day at Hidden Lakes Hunting Resort. "Huck" is a rather modest sort, so Bill and Kathryn are the ones to tell of his growing fame, which includes features in over 32 newspapers, two magazines (three now ... but who's counting?) and a cable hunting show. What's so interesting about Huckleberry, you ask? Well, he's just not your average bird-hunting hound.

Billy said Huck came to live with his family almost by accident. The Burnetts were not really looking for a Jack Russell terrier, as all of the specialty dogs at Hidden Lakes are "bird dog" varieties used in the business to hunt, flush, point and retrieve. But, one of his lodge guests was looking for a good-quality Labrador retriever and offered a Jack Russell pup and \$400 in trade. Billy took the deal with the intention of Huck being a house pet for Kathryn. Well, Huck did live up to that expectation, but also started adding to his own duties one by one. At the house, he is Kathryn's dog and he's content to follow her around, lying by her feet or in her lap. But when a hunt is on, he's just

one of the hounds, ready to roam the hunting grounds.

Those grounds are an expansive 545 acres dotted with 14 ponds and lakes. The resort was named by Kathryn, with the "lake" part of the name being for obvious reasons. But the "hidden" part accounts for the fact that it is bounded in all directions by farms, and visitors will not see a road from any location on the resort. Since the resort is so rural, guests may very well spy just about any type of local wildlife, including ducks, deer, coyotes, bobcats, boar and others that roam or fly onto the property.

All of this nature and seclusion is part of the appeal, but that's not the reason most people visit Hidden Lakes. They usually come for the world-class guided European-style bird hunting that the Burnetts have perfected. Hunters can choose between hunting pheasants, quail and chukar partridges. The walking and tower hunts at Hidden Lakes are "all inclusive," and Billy and Kathryn designed them based on their own past experiences at top-rated lodges.

His whole life, while owning and operating a dairy and then operating a construction business, Billy had dreamed of owning a hunting lodge. So, shortly (two weeks) after he and Kathryn retired from their construction business, they decided to embark on that venture. Only six months later, the resort was open for business.

For hunters at Hidden Lakes, the most important emphasis is a focus on safety. Each hunt begins with an orientation with the guides going over shotgun shell restric-



ABOVE: Billy and Kathryn Burnett have carved out a picturesque niche that is a calming and restful backdrop for the lodge. **RIGHT:** Huckleberry is the unofficial ambassador of Hidden Lakes Hunting Resort—and a surprising but official member of the bird-hunting team. **OPPOSITE:** Don't let the rustic ambiance of the 10,400-square-foot Hidden Lakes Lodge fool you. Any stays here are a back-to-nature-experience, but with all of the modern conveniences.



tions, gun-handling techniques for the walking hunts and other tips to help protect both the hunters and the dogs. One such tip goes, “These dogs start from \$3,000 to \$10,000. If one yelps, you own it.”

Each dog was trained by the Burnetts’ son Cord, who also acts as one of several guides and dog handlers on the various hunts. Old Hank, a yellow Labrador, is Cord’s personal pet, but also a well-trained pro on hunts. There are also others just as adept as Old Hank, including setters, Brittany spaniels, pointers and a vizsla—each with their own set of talents, and all are full working members of the hunting guide team. These dogs are some of the best around; they have a reputation to uphold. So when Kathryn suggested that Cord allow Huckleberry to go along on a hunt or two, it’s reasonable to expect that Cord might have been a little reluctant. After all, what could be expected from a half-pint terrier breed not known for bird-hunting talents?

As it turns out, a lot. Huckleberry, it seems, is a pretty quick study. In addition to his parlor tricks of dancing and playing dead when “shot” by Billy’s pretend pistol, Huckleberry, against all odds, is one heck of a bird dog. Thoughtful at first, he watched the other dogs and then seemed to deduce just what to do. He is now one of the premier bird flushers and retrievers, and he even retrieves in water. And his latest trick, acting as a pointer, is something to see. So, it’s no wonder that many hunters make a special request to add Huck to their hunt.

Billy says one of the main reasons people come to Hidden Lakes to hunt is to watch and work with their dogs. A basic hunt will include six to nine dogs, with hunters starting out at 8 a.m. traveling to their fields in ATVs. Hunters can pick from various packages, depending on the number and types of pen-raised birds they plan to hunt. But don’t let the “pen-



raised” description fool you. These birds are raised onsite in total seclusion, so they react and fly for to make for an exciting hunt. On the walking hunts, these birds are then released into one of the five hunting fields on the resort. These hunts consist of either a half-day or a full-day event. In addition to the walking hunts, the resort also offers European-style

tower hunts. Packages include a full sit-down country meal cooked by Joanne Noel, who’s mindful of all of the little details and gets shining reviews for her culinary skills. It doesn’t hurt, either, that most of Joanne’s ingredients are locally grown, with many of them coming from the two-acre garden at the resort. Patting their full bellies after the hunt, guests can then relax around a full bar and a roaring fire while their birds are being cleaned and vacuum-packed.

Those who have made arrangements to stay overnight have their pick of eight brand-new rooms, each with two queen-size beds and a private bath. Or, for guests who want a little more comfort, there is also a 1,600-square-foot suite with two bedrooms, a kitchen and a 900-square-foot deck. On the bottom floor of the lodge is a striking rustic dining room that includes an outdoor, covered patio.

All of the room and dining facilities were built this year. Billy explains, “We’d gotten big enough where we needed the facilities to support the business.” But, with the hunting season running only from October to the end of March, the Burnetts built the lodge with an eye toward expanding their business. When planning the lodge, they also added an executive conference room with a flat-screen television and wireless connections. The dining room seats up to 80, and when expanding onto the patio, can seat up to 150 guests. And speaking of the patio, it has a stage with full technical hookups for a band or DJ. And, there is even a full bar that rolls outside.

The lodge, however nice on the inside (and it is), sits amid a half acre of landscaped gardens that include a trickling brook, waterfall, idyllic bridge and gazebo with flagstone paths. The business that was started strictly for hunting six months of the year has now diversified. Special events now include weddings, rehearsal dinners, corporate retreats, holiday dinners and family reunions.

Since its 2008 opening, Hidden Lakes Hunting Resort is not so hidden anymore. They’ve not really advertised, but “word of mouth” has pulled in guests and groups from Tyler, Dallas, New York and elsewhere in the country, and internationally as far away as China. Kathryn says, “I’m so proud that we have integrity and service that people appreciate.” Billy says his enjoyment is in watching guests come to have a good time. He relays, “From when they get out of their cars here, they are laughing and having fun. When they are hunting, they are laughing and having fun. When they are eating, they are laughing and having fun. That’s about as good of enjoyment as you ever have—getting to see people happy. No matter who they are, everybody becomes the same at a hunting resort.”

So, when you go to Hidden Lakes, expect all the fine details to be taken care of by Billy, Kathryn and their crew. But, you will also be expected “to laugh and have fun.” Moreover, expect the Huckleberry hound to agree with all of this.

Hidden Lakes is one mile east of Highway 17 on County Road 1912 in Yantis (75497) and is served by Wood County Electric Cooperative. Learn more about the resort at www.hiddenlakeshuntingresort.com or call 1-888-HUNT TXS.

Let There Be Light... and a Starry Night

Back in 2007, WCEC began installing high-pressure sodium (HPS) lights to fulfill all new security light orders. Almost half of WCEC's members have security lights, and the bulk of those are mercury vapor (MV) security lights. As these MV lights require maintenance or break, they will not be repaired but will be replaced with the newer HPS lights. This action will help comply with the Energy Act of 2005, which specified that mercury lamp ballasts can no longer be manufactured or imported into the United States.



WCEC's move to replace MV with HPS will offer energy-efficient and environmentally sound benefits, while allowing WCEC to continue to offer the elective security light service.

Energy efficiency is one of the primary goals for this switch, and HPS lights use approximately 50 percent less energy than MV lights. They offer other eco-friendly advantages as well. Disposal of mercury has associated environmental and health risks while HPS does not. HPS lights are more "astronomy friendly" than MV, which casts a white light that interferes with astronomical observations.

All existing MV security lights will eventually be swapped to HPS in a phased approach as each MV service life ends. There will be no charge for the replacement, when needed, if the replacement is because of a nonworking MV. If a replacement is not necessary to replace a nonworking light, but if a member has a preference for HPS, a member may order this change by paying the one-time \$37 fee. Assuming normal care and absence of consumer damage, any repairs and maintenance to the installed HPS unit will be free.

WHAT TO EXPECT FROM HPS LIGHTS

- Once switched on, HPS lights require about a four-minute warm-up time to reach full brilliance.
- HPS lights emit a yellow-orange-colored light.
- HPS security lights have an auto on/off sensor and will respond as natural light diminishes/increases.
- HPS lights emit spectra of light that tend to attract fewer insects.

THE BENEFITS OF A SECURITY LIGHT

Security lights are an enigma, because they seem to serve two diametrically opposed purposes: to dissuade visitors and also to welcome them. By way of explanation, security lights are a superb deterrent to those who may want to commit some criminal mischief under the cover of darkness. Additionally, in rural areas, nocturnal wild animals are likely to steer clear of them. But for those welcome guests, security lights can make nighttime navigation much easier and safer in and around the yard, as well as acting as a beacon to finding a house or business off the beaten path.

At WCEC, 100-watt HPS security lights are a good value at only \$7 per month, with 250-watt lights at \$12.50 per month if installed on an existing pole. For an additional charge, as per the tariff, a pole can also be installed just for a security light. To inquire further, or to order yours today, call a WCEC member services representative at (903) 763-2203.

Notice of Capital Credit Allocations

WCEC has allocated to each member their share of the 2009 margins, which is revenue over expenses. Member's patronage for the year 2009 of 6.73% (.0673) will be credited to the member's capital credit account. This notice published in accordance with Article IX, Section 2, of Wood County EC's bylaws.

Untangle Cords and Wires

It's time to haul out the extension cords and the piles of holiday lights. Keep your cords and cables from becoming an eyesore or a fire waiting to happen by following three rules:

- 1. EXTENSION CORDS ARE FOR TEMPORARY USE ONLY.** Never use one to help the cord on a permanent lamp or appliance reach the outlet. Move the lamp closer to the outlet or call an electrician to add an outlet closer to the lamp.
- 2. TIDY YOUR TANGLE OF CORDS AND CABLES** around the Christmas tree and in areas where you use electronics. Look behind your desk or TV cabinet, and you'll probably find a rat's nest of cords. Unplug and store away any that aren't in use, and bundle the rest up with Velcro cord wrap or zip ties.
- 3. DON'T RELY TOO HEAVILY ON POWER STRIPS.** If you've got dozens of cords plugged into power strips and surge protectors around your Christmas tree or elsewhere in your home, you could be overloading your electrical circuits. Those devices let you plug lots of cords into one wall outlet, but they don't give that outlet any extra juice. The solution: Hire a licensed electrician to upgrade your circuits and add outlets.



For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be the sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger.

And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men!"

—LUKE 2:11-14

MERRY CHRISTMAS

from the Directors and Employees of Wood County EC