

OUTDOOR ADVENTURES 11-16-03

Nothing utterly spectacular happened this past weekend, so I'll be sparing of words. The deer hunting was pretty slow from my lofty vantage point in Comfort. Maybe word has gotten around the woods of the long range effectiveness of my .25-06. Or more likely, maybe the deer decided I stink. Either way, only the young and the slickheads visited my blind, and I think I only saw about 7 deer in Saturday's drizzle, then jumped 3 from their beds as I poked around the woods. One was a small doe, and the other 2 were larger but didn't show their heads. Had I been strictly meat hunting, one of the last 2 could have filled the freezer.

But my passion in fossil hunting once again made the best of a slow trip afield. I poked around Hwy 173 north of Bandera and indulged in the echinoid collecting. Once again I was the camouflaged guy clawing at the roadcuts. Nobody honked this time. Maybe the camo scares them!

Bandera seems to hold a treasure trove of large *Hemiaster* and *Heteraster* echinoids as seen in Figure 1. Some are in impeccable condition, others are slightly wrinkled or crushed. Many reveal subtle plate and tubercle ("pimple") detail not always preserved so well. A couple *Salenias* (spiny urchins) and gastropods were thrown in for good measure. The area deserves another look next weekend. I'm torn between cleaning a deer and having more time to mine echinoids.



FIGURE 1: Bandera Echinoids

3 *Hemiasters* far left, 2 *Salenias* top center, one gastropod top left, remainder fall into 2 species of *Heterasters*

On Sunday I ventured to my boss' small acreage plot near New Braunfels and plopped down against a tree cradling my crossbow before dawn, the fickle breeze in my face. Bad move! As it was getting light 10 minutes later, a doe stomped her hoof and snorted at me for 5 minutes. I was obviously winded as I sat motionless. Such are the vagaries and vicissitudes of hunting!

After I decided the hunt was over at 8:30 and walked around the property sans weapon, the animals decided to move through! I saw 2 bucks, one pretty nice, and 4 more does. Sustenance was not in the cards for me this weekend. But once again I hit paydirt in another way. While leaning against a tree, I happened to look down and snag a hand sized flint scraper which is more than welcome in my artifact collection. See Figure 2.



FIGURE 2: Flint Scraper from New Braunfels

Now I know why I never kill anything while hunting...I'm too busy scanning the ground.