

# CUTTING THEM "OLD SCHOOL" IN TEXAS



By Capt. Kris Kelley, Castaway Lodge in Seadrift, Texas

**"Old school" is a belief and practice that celebrates the heritage and best traditions of waterfowling.**

Located on the middle Texas Gulf Coast is where you'll find Coastal Waterfowl's Castaway Lodge in Seadrift, Texas, pop. 1,280. This year marks our 20th year in Seadrift. When folks ask me what brought me here, the ducks is always the answer! It's a stretch of waterfowl paradise where our "old school philosophy" meets prime Central Flyway species on vast expanses of public and private marsh.

What is "old school" you ask? It is a belief and practice that celebrates the heritage and best traditions of waterfowling. The "old school label" belongs to the artists that paint a masterpiece of strategy; calling artistry; and, close-in shooting backed by decades of water body knowledge. Celebrating the traditions of waterfowling found us documenting the first application of layout boats in a commercial operation in 2008 on the Texas Gulf Coast. We documented this for the historical record in high definition video that can be found on YouTube to this day by searching Texas Layout Boat Hunting. Thinking outside the box and exploring "new to us" techniques is something that has set us apart and led to relentless referrals among our guests.

## **Collectors Paradise**

We strive for the perfect decoying presentations of Pintails, Wigeon, Gadwall, Teal, Redheads, Mottled Ducks, and other central flyway species. Snow, Ross and Speckle Belly Geese, "cupped and committed", offer the perfect combinations and take us afield from sun up to sun down following their movements. Most of the off season finds us on the water daily ranging the bays in search of

Speckled Trout and Redfish on fishing charters. Our fishing provides a great combination trip for guests wanting to take in both the hunting and fishing aspects of an adventure here.

## **Eyes to the Skies**

When the first cool fronts of September turn to cold fronts in October through December, our eyes turn to the skies. September sees the first signs of the fall waterfowl migration with Hummingbirds here at the lodge being an indication that things are on the move. Fresh water runoff determines salinity levels in the bays and back lakes and that sets the stage for advancing or declining bottom grass growth. This is what holds our ducks. At this time we'll begin to assess where grass is present and begin to focus on a strategy for the season.

## **Keeping With Tradition**

Despite ultra commercialization and high density blinds in many venues, to this day we limit party sizes to 4 and no mixing parties with only a few exceptions. The Texas Coast depends on ambush tactics and an ability to move with rapidly changing water levels and fast moving ducks.

## **No Country for Junk Jack**

Inherent in most successful waterfowling is treacherous terrain and tough to navigate environs. The Texas Coast is no different.

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Vast expanses of super shallow flats; stretches of hard bottoms; rapidly changing water levels; and, mazes of back lakes and haunts require top flight equipment and the “know-how” to use it in the worst conditions. For years we’ve looked no further than American Airboats in Orange, Texas. Waterfowling and Springtime Airboat Redfishing trips “know no weather cancellations”. Brutal front passages involving howling 30 and 40 knot winds find us pushing the equipment to the limits.

American’s Air Ranger Airboats are built for big Texas coastal waters where deep water crossings in 2 and 3 foot waves with heavy loads are common. It was about 13 years ago when I put my first airboat on the water. The knuckle busting days of the big blocks; 10 hour head job turnarounds; trash in the primaries or secondaries; sucked and tuliped valves are a thing of the past. Those issues have given way to the reliability of up armored, light weight fuel injected ground pounding power plants like those from Mast Motorsports. The tools are a little rusty now days and I’d have to get the books out to find top dead center on #1 cylinder anymore. That’s fine with me. When we have an issue now it’s usually something minor like a sensor and Faron or Sallie at American Airboats and the folks at Mast Motorsports get us turned around quickly.

### **Casual Comfort**

At the start and end to a trip to the Texas Coast is the warm and genuine hospitality afforded by our full service lodge, Castaway Lodge. Built in 2007 and operating year around, it offers well appointed surroundings in a casual atmosphere. My wife Wendi does the cooking and runs a tight ship when it comes to logistics and the finer details. Her table fare is legendary among our guests and she has set the stage for many a successful day afield and on the water. We can accommodate up to 16 guests with plenty of genuine southern hospitality.



### **The Last Special Place**

If you have never hunted the Texas Gulf Coast, it’s definitely a trip worth considering. I’ve seldom had anyone from out-of-state that isn’t mesmerized by our environs and the abundance of waterfowl. We have always offered our guests the best combination trips including inland goose hunting in the morning followed by afternoon bay duck hunting.

Some guests like to shoot puddle ducks in the morning leaving an opening in the limit for our signature afternoon

diver hunts for Redheads. For the discriminating hunter, layout boat hunts for both divers and puddle ducks are much more comfortable in the milder temperatures here on the Texas coast.

Cast and blast trips featuring morning wingshooting followed by an afternoon of rod bending excitement is another specialty. Regardless of the schedule, we always remain flexible within the schedule and do our best to strategize for the best possible outcome for our guests.

We’d like to welcome you to celebrate our 20th year here on the middle coast of Texas and introduce you to some of the best waterfowling in North America. If you are looking for an outfitter that has the best people backed up by great equipment and a traditional approach to waterfowling, then look no further. Come join us!

The advertisement is on a green background. It features a circular logo for Castaway Lodge Seadrift Texas, which includes a duck and a fish. To the right of the logo, it says "Capt. Kris Kelley" and "Seadrift/Port O'Connor, Texas". Below that, it says "Fishing &amp; Hunting Guide Services" and "Trout • Redfish • Waterfowl • Big Game". At the bottom, it has the phone number "1-888-618-HUNT" and the website "seadriftbayfishing.com".