



JOSHUA CREEK RANCH IS THE ONLY BERETTA TRIDENT LODGE IN TEXAS.

THE HILL COUNTRY'S BEST-KEPT SECRET

Wingshooting and deer hunting destination Joshua Creek Ranch confirms and continues its reputation for excellence. BY: RIC DENTINGER

Back in the late 1980s, the years many old Texans refer to as “the Texas Depression,” Joe and Ann Kercheville weren’t the only ranch owners wondering what they could do to make their Hill Country ranch operation financially viable. Along with the failure of banks and savings and loan companies, purebred Texas longhorn cattle prices literally bit the dust.

The high quality of the Kerchevilles’ “JK” branded herd was well-

known among longhorn breeders, but that wouldn’t pay the feed bills or convince the IRS that the financial loss from maintaining the registered herd was an eligible tax deduction. No, the IRS was threatening to declare the cattle operation at Joshua Creek Ranch a “hobby loss.”

It’s funny how things fall into place when you least expect it. Just as the viability of the longhorn cattle operation was threatened, the Kerchevilles had returned from their second consecutive year of driven pheasant shooting in Scotland. The experience was phenomenal – one

they hoped to make a tradition.

Joe started comparing their Texas Hill Country ranch terrain to that of the shooting sites in Scotland. He decided driven pheasant shooting could be a good use for the rocky bluffs that perched over the two miles of Joshua Creek flowing through the ranch to its confluence with the Guadalupe River (the north boundary of Joshua Creek Ranch).

The timing also coincided with Ann’s desire to return to the business world after five years of managing their longhorn operations from a home office while mothering their sons, Joseph and Joshua. Her background as a financial officer for a New York stock exchange company made for a good combination with Joe’s professional investment expertise and vast hunting experience. Together, they began

crafting a first-class wingshooting destination that opened in 1990, a time when hunting preserves were not highly regarded among Texas hunters.

Of course, professionally guided quail hunting behind well-trained pointing and flushing/retrieving dogs was part of the plan from the beginning. It’s a must for Texans hunting upland birds, and Joshua Creek Ranch’s reputation for excellence has been confirmed.

In 2010, Joshua Creek Ranch was selected as one of the four charter lodges to earn a Beretta One Trident Lodge designation for excellence in upland bird hunting. Beretta, the 500-year-old gun maker, initiated the program to give its customers confidence in destinations that shared Beretta’s commitment to excellence and the sporting life. The designa-



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tion can only be earned, not purchased. By 2011, Joshua Creek Ranch earned a second trident and became a Beretta Two Trident Lodge. It's still the only Beretta Trident Lodge in Texas.

"Ann's the day-to-day manager and the force that makes Joshua Creek Ranch the highly desirable destination it's become," said Joe, giving his wife a quick hug. "But our whole team knows that Joe's the quality control barometer for our operation," Ann added. "If the habitat, birds, guides, dogs, food service and lodging are good enough for Joe, then they are very, very good," she laughed.

Other sporting activities at Joshua Creek Ranch include a fully automated sporting clays course, year-round trophy axis deer hunting, whitetail deer and turkey hunting in season, private Columbaire pigeon shoots, fly fishing for trout and blue gills in spring-fed Joshua Creek and kayaking and tubing at the Guadalupe River.

The latest addition to the sporting opportunities at Joshua Creek Ranch is dove hunting packages that combine high-volume dove shooting in the nearby south zone destinations of Castroville and Hondo with the award-winning dining and lodging at the ranch. Add-ons to the packages include morning quail hunts and driven pheasant shoots.

The Kerchevilles have a passion for

Joshua Creek Ranch not unlike many Texas landholders who've put their hearts and souls into their farm or ranch. They've sweat figurative blood many times over in the near 30 years they've owned the ranch, facing devastating floods at one extreme and years of drought at the other. But in those times, the glass has always appeared half-full to them, presenting an opportunity to turn the changes dictated by Mother Nature into improvements for future generations of heirs and hunters.

The Kercheville family's continuous ownership and pristine wildlife habitat is the plan that's been put into motion for the future of Joshua Creek Ranch. The ranch will remain a wildlife habitat forever thanks to the conservation easements placed on the property by the Kerchevilles.

With the population explosion of San Antonio, the nearby Boerne area could not escape notice as a highly desirable location for living, retiring or owning a second home. The terms of the conservation easement (overseen by the Cibolo Conservancy in Boerne) ensure that Joshua Creek Ranch will never be developed, but will always remain the pristine wildlife environment it is today.

For more information on Joshua Creek Ranch, visit www.joshuacreekranch.com.