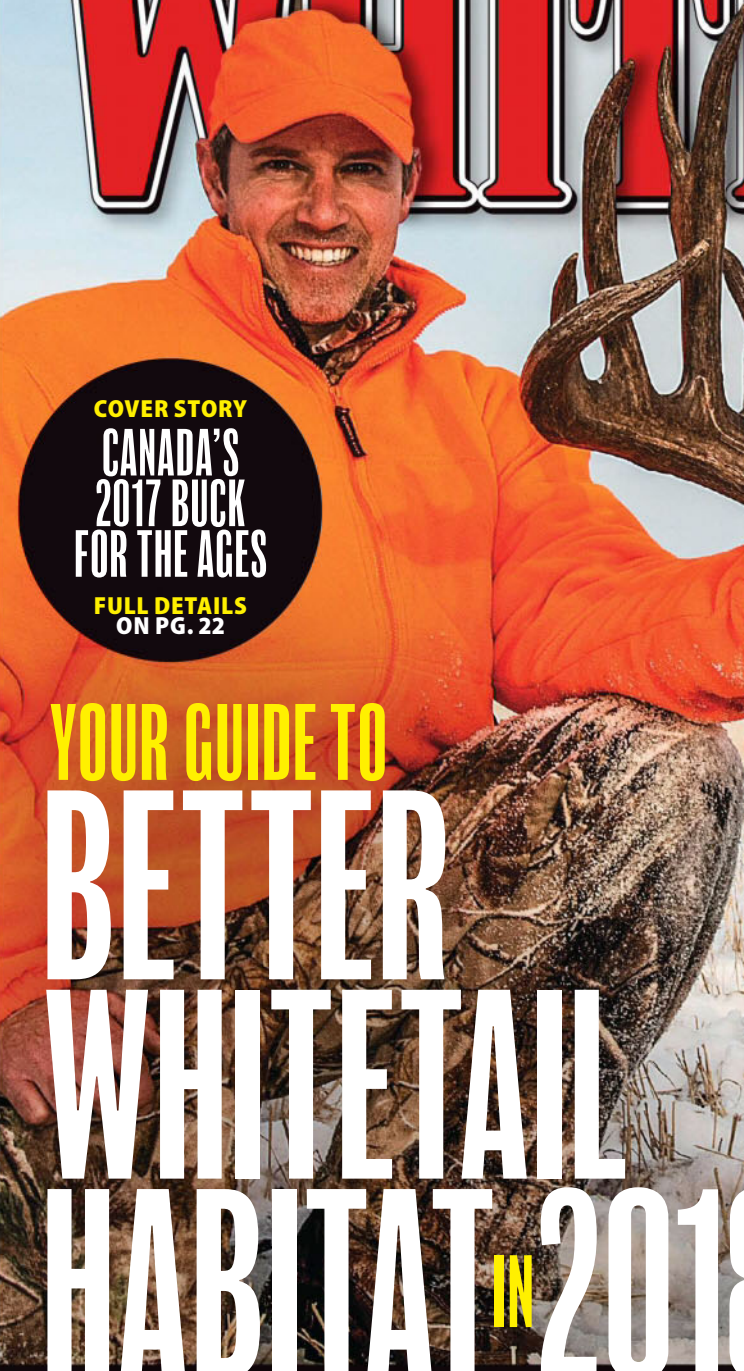




33" WIDE: A First Buck You Won't Believe!

north american **WHITETAIL**™



COVER STORY
CANADA'S
2017 BUCK
FOR THE AGES
FULL DETAILS
ON PG. 22

YOUR GUIDE TO **BETTER** **WHITETAIL** **HABITAT** **IN** **2018**

BIG BUCK
PATTERNS
SETUPS & TIMES
YOU CAN RELY ON

> Food Plots That Really Produce > How To Control Harmful Plants

TRUE TALES OF RECORD RACKS
NEW YORK, LOUISIANA, KENTUCKY & MORE

WE

Grow Big Antlers
Grow Big Deer
Grow Big Trophy Rooms



Heartland Wildlife™

www.heartlandwildlife.com • 866.494.3337

ANTICOSTI

THE DEER ISLAND



BOOK YOUR 2018 DEER HUNT NOW

Sépaq Anticosti is a unique jewel of the Canadian wilderness. Shielded by the majestic Gulf of St. Lawrence, Deer Island's breathtaking scenery promises a one-of-a-kind hunting vacation.

AMERICAN PLAN PACKAGE + GUIDE + MEALS

From
\$2,675 /hunter
(USD)*

**HUGE, SAFE,
EXCLUSIVE TERRITORY**
(40 mi²**/group)
2 DEER/HUNTER

THE PACKAGE INCLUDES:

- Two deer per hunter (male, female or fawn)
- Air transportation from Mont-Joli
- 7 nights of accommodation and 6 days of hunting in September and October or 5 nights of accommodation and 4 days of hunting in November and December
- 3 meals per day
- 4 x 4 truck (6 passengers)
- 1 guide and an ATV

* Taxes and hunting licence are extra. Package price for September and October 2018. Prices in U.S. dollars may vary according to the fluctuation of exchange rates and exchange fees charged by credit card issuers. Departure available from Quebec City or Montreal - an additional fee of \$161/hunter apply. Certain conditions apply. **Average area.

Photo: Mathieu Dupuis

sepaqanticosti.com/ultimate-prize

1-800-463-0863

RÉSEAU **Sépaq** 

SPRING 2018

FEATURES

40

NEEDLES IN THE HAYSTACK

Why do some people seem to have all the luck finding sheds? Hint: It's not luck.
BY DAN COLE

22

BREAKING THE CURSE

Persistence and a desperation tactic helped me take one of Saskatchewan's greatest typical whitetails. Here's how it happened last December.

BY CHRIS DE VILLIERS

26

BOTH SIDES OF THE RIVER

This freaky New York buck was known to many locals. But his story ended when my crossbow and I encountered him on a bitterly cold day.

BY ROBERT ORTALINI

30

PLOTS THAT PULL

No one knows how many acres of food plots are planted for whitetails each year, but it's a lot. Here's why some produce so much better results than others do.

BY GORDON WHITTINGTON

36

A LUCKY LOSS

Travis Links was naturally disappointed when a big Louisiana buck gave him the slip. Years later, though, the avid bowhunter got the last laugh.

BY CLIFFORD NEAMES

48

DOWNHILL FROM HERE?

Every young hunter hopes for a nice buck. But Ontario resident Jordy Hope's first buck left him with few whitetail worlds left to conquer.

BY DAN COLE

52

REPEATING HISTORY

Confused as to where to start scouting? Unless something drastic happens with the habitat, count on big bucks continuing to use the same places as before.

BY STEVE BARTYLLO

56

ONE MORE RIDGE

Sometimes trophy success simply boils down to putting in the time and effort. Chris Skaggs proved it with a Kentucky muzzleloader buck for the ages.

BY BILL COOPER



NOT ALL BOWHUNTERS ARE CREATED EQUAL.



A NEW CLASS OF BOWS. BUILT FOR BOWHUNTERS WHO DEMAND EVERYTHING.



AVAILABLE ONLY AT GENUINE HOYT RETAILERS.

AN OUTDOOR SPORTSMAN GROUP® PUBLICATION

PUBLISHER Tom Weaver

ASSOCIATE PUBLISHER Danny Farris

EDITORIAL

EDITOR IN CHIEF Gordon Whittington

ASSOCIATE EDITOR Haynes Shelton

PRODUCTION EDITOR Rita Head

ART DIRECTOR Jennifer Kiefaber

PHOTO EDITOR Ron Sinfelt

TELEVISION TEAM

Stan Potts | Dr. James Kroll

Mike Clerkin | Jeremy Moore

EDITORIAL ADMINISTRATOR Joanne Blair

SENIOR ILLUSTRATION ARTIST Allen Hansen

PRODUCTION

PRODUCTION MANAGER Kathryn McGlothlen

PRODUCTION COORDINATOR Jenny Kaeb

ENDEMIC AD SALES

NATIONAL ENDEMIC SALES

Jim McConville | (440) 791-7017

WESTERN REGION

Hutch Looney | hutch@hlooney.com

ADVERTISING SALES REPRESENTATIVE

Tom Weaver | (570) 374-5757

ON THE TRAIL/MARKETPLACE ADVERTISING

Mark Thiffault | (800) 200-7885

Joe Smith | (678) 589-2043

NATIONAL AD SALES

ACCOUNT DIRECTOR – DETROIT OFFICE

Kevin Donley (248) 798-4458 | Kevin.Donley@outdoorsg.com

NATIONAL ACCOUNT EXECUTIVE – CHICAGO OFFICE

Carl Benson (312) 955-0496 | Carl.Benson@outdoorsg.com

DIRECT RESPONSE ADVERTISING/NON-ENDEMIC

Anthony Smyth (914) 693-8700 | Anthony@smythmedia.com

NORTHAMERICANWHITETAIL.COM

NORTH AMERICAN WHITETAIL (ISSN-0746-6250). Published eight times a year, including one double issue (Feb., June, July, Aug., Sept., Oct., Nov., Dec./Jan.), by Outdoor Sportsman Group®, 1040 6th Ave., 12th Floor, New York, NY 10018-3703. Periodicals postage paid at New York, NY, and at additional mailing offices. **POSTMASTER:** Send address changes (form 3579) to North American WHITETAIL, P.O. Box 37539, Boone, IA 50037-0539. Canadian undeliverable mail to: 500 Rt 46 East, Clifton, NJ 07011. Canada Post Publications Mail Agreement No. 41405030.

SUBSCRIPTIONS INQUIRIES: For address changes, subscriptions, or questions write North American Whitetail, P.O. Box 37539, Boone, IA 50037-0539, or e-mail WHTcustserv@cdsfulfillment.com, or call TOLL FREE 1-800-448-0756. **BE AWARE THAT NORTH AMERICAN WHITETAIL ONLY ACCEPTS SUBSCRIPTION REQUESTS FROM AUTHORIZED AGENTS! WE MAY NOT HONOR REQUESTS FROM UNAUTHORIZED AGENTS, AND YOU THEREFORE MAY LOSE YOUR MONEY IF YOU BUY FROM AN UNAUTHORIZED AGENT.** If you are offered a subscription to North American Whitetail, please call 1-800-448-0756 to determine if the agent is authorized. For more information on subscription scams, please visit www.ftc.gov.

Subscription rate for one year is \$19.97 (U.S., APO, FPO, and U.S. possessions). Canada add \$13.00 (U.S. funds) per year, includes sales tax and GST. Foreign add \$15.00 (U.S. funds) per year.

Occasionally, our subscriber list is made available to reputable firms offering goods and services that we believe would be of interest to our readers. **If you prefer to be excluded, please send your current address label and a note requesting to be excluded from these promotions to: Outdoor Sportsman Group®, 1040 6th Ave., 12th Floor, New York, NY 10018-3703, Attn: Privacy Coordinator, or email your label information and note to privacycoordinator@outdoorsg.com.**

FOR REPRINTS: For Reprints/Eprints or Licensing/Permissions, please contact Wright's Media - TOLL FREE 1 (877) 652-5295.

CONTRIBUTIONS: Manuscripts, photographs and artwork must be submitted to the editorial department with a SASE. The Publisher assumes no responsibility for loss or damage to unsolicited material. Please send to: **North American Whitetail**
3330 Chastain Meadows Pkwy. NW, Suite 200,
Kennesaw, GA 30144-5881



20

GEAR WISE

Better practice habits can make for better results next bow season.

DEPARTMENTS

8 MY STAND

Losing a good deer lease can cause plenty of heartache.

10 NAW CONSERVATION

Are whitetails behind the Minnesota moose decline?

14 DR. DEER

Invasive plants can quickly reduce the health of deer habitat—and thus, the herd. Here's how to fight back.

17 NAW TV

Through June, you'll find our show on two great channels.

60 DIY

For DIY whitetailers, eastern Montana can be a fun and game rich hotspot. But don't delay permit applications are due soon.

62 HALL OF FAME

Readers share photos of their treasured trophy bucks.

64 TRAILS & TAILS

As I've learned from my kids' fascination with old antlers, some fond whitetail memories are yet to be made.

ON THE COVER:

Chris de Villiers shot this colossal Saskatchewan buck last season. See pg. 22 for full details on one of the top typicals in history.

Photo by Jody Ruskowski



OUTDOOR SPORTSMAN

GROUP®
INTEGRATED MEDIA

PRESIDENT & CEO **Jim Liberatore**

CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER,
PUBLISHING & BRANDED MEDIA **Mike Carney**

SENIOR VP, FINANCE &
PUBLISHING OPERATIONS **Derek Sevcik**

VP, CONSUMER MARKETING **Peter Watt**

VP, MANUFACTURING **Deb Daniels**

DIRECTOR, MARKETING **Kim Shay**

SENIOR DIRECTOR, PRODUCTION **Connie Mendoza**

DIRECTOR, PUBLISHING TECHNOLOGY **Kyle Morgan**

OUTDOOR SPORTSMAN GROUP®, DIGITAL

EDITORIAL DIRECTOR, FISHING **Jeff Simpson**

DIGITAL EDITOR, HUNTING **Drew Pellman**

For questions regarding digital editions, please contact
digitalsupport@outdoorsg.com.

MEDIA

outdoorsg.com

TELEVISION

outdoorchannel.com
thesportsmanchannel.com
worldfishingnetwork.com

HUNTING

bowhunter.com
bowhuntingmag.com
gundogmag.com
petersenshunting.com
northamericanwhitetail.com
wildfowlmag.com

FISHING

bassfan.com
floridasportsman.com
flyfisherman.com
gameandfishmag.com
in-fisherman.com

SHOOTING

firearmsnews.com
gunsandammo.com
handguns.com
rifleshootermag.com
shootingtimes.com

COPYRIGHT 2018 BY OUTDOOR SPORTSMAN GROUP®

All Rights Reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced without written permission.

NORTH AMERICAN WHITETAIL® is a registered trademark of Outdoor Sportsman Group® in the United States.

The Publisher and authors make no representations or warranties regarding the accuracy, completeness, and timeliness of the information contained in this publication. Any reliance or use of the information is solely at your own risk, and the authors and Publisher disclaim any and all liability relating thereto. Any prices given in this issue were suggested prices at the press time and are subject to change.

Some advertisements in this magazine may concern products that are not legally for sale to California residents or residents in other jurisdictions.

NorthAmericanWhitetail.com

DEVOTED

"LAND AND ASSETS CAN BE BOUGHT AND SOLD, BUT THE STORIES, MEMORIES AND TIME SHARED IS THE LEGACY YOU WILL LEAVE. IN THAT WAY, THE LAND YOU OWN AND MANAGE RESEMBLES WHAT YOU ARE YOURSELF."

LARRY CHRISTENSEN
RETIRED JOHN DEERE VP



WHITETAIL PROPERTIES REAL ESTATE

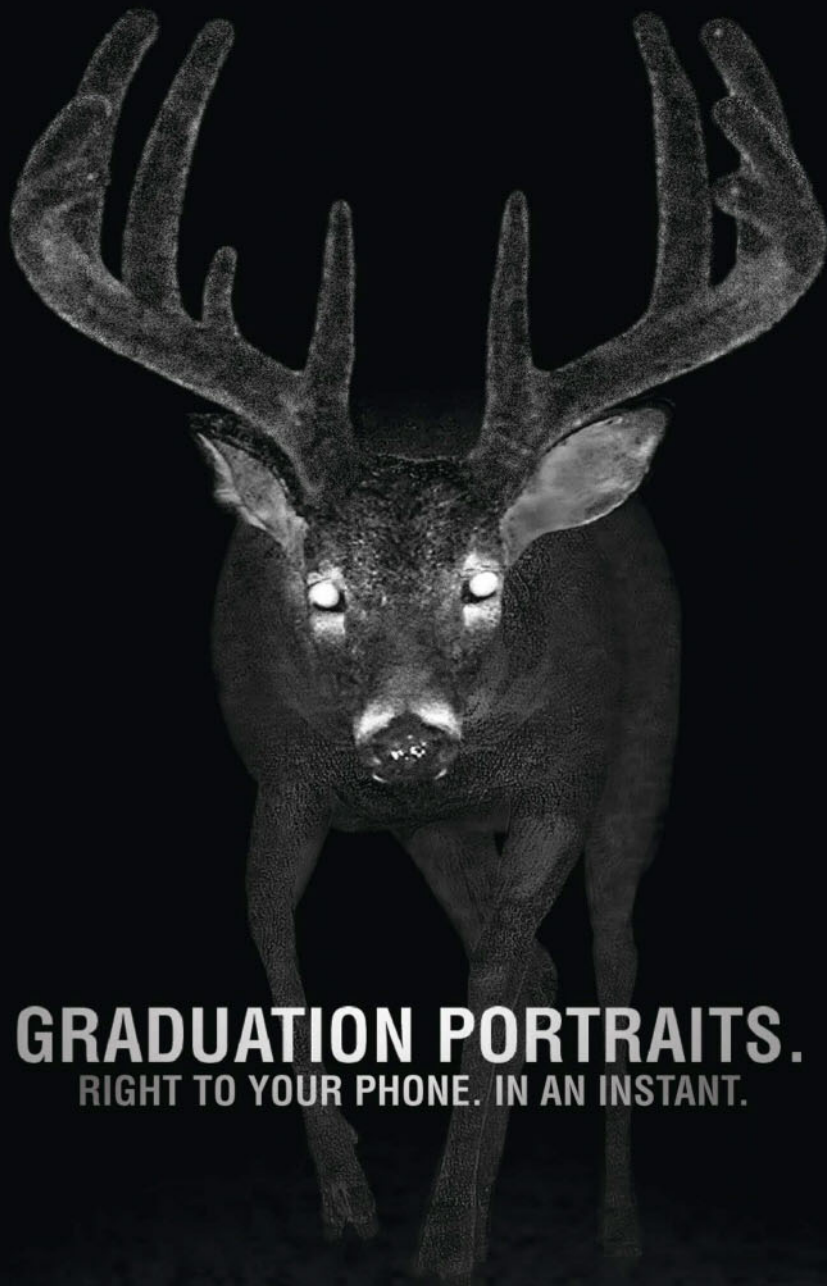
HUNTING | RANCH | FARM | TIMBER

WHITETAILPROPERTIES.COM



SPARTAN 
GOCAM

With remote, real-time images sent to your phone, tablet or computer, 24/7



GRADUATION PORTRAITS.
RIGHT TO YOUR PHONE. IN AN INSTANT.



surveillance by Spartan is at the top of the class.

connected by
verizon✓

spartancamera.com

LOSING THE LAND

For the ethical whitetail hunter, not being able to find a lost deer is among life's lowest moments. Even if you've had 100 successful recoveries, letting just one get away gnaws at you from then on.

Sadly, the pain of losing a good deer-hunting spot can hit just as hard. And it can last just as long.

As paid access to private ground spread across white-tail country, it theoretically should have made life simpler for hunters and landowners alike. Rather than depending solely on the charity of people who owned property, hunters could provide compensation — money, labor, whatever — both parties felt was a fair trade for hunting access. If both sides lived up to their end of the deal, it should have been a clear win-win. The hunter could be assured of having access to the same land year after year. And the landowner could get income and the comfort of knowing a trustworthy person (or group)

was helping to keep an eye on the place.

In many cases it worked out just as described, with safe hunting, well-managed land and friendships lasting a lifetime. But in others, something went wrong along the way. The marriage dissolved.

I've leased deer-hunting access from people and to people, so I know how it can go on each end. As eager young lease members start families, their money and time can grow so tight they decide to drop out. For elderly sportsmen, health issues often arise, diverting resources and focus away from the land they once were excited to hunt. And for hunters of any age, often it's simply a case of finding other land with better prospects, or similar prospects at a better price or closer to home. Regardless, the result is hunters walking away from land they've leased for years.

Meanwhile, on the landowner's end a number of key changes can occur. And even-

tually, at least one of them will. Timber is cut. More cattle are stocked. Adjacent land is sold to someone who has trouble remembering where the property lines are. For one of those reasons or perhaps another, the leased land becomes less attractive as a hunting spot.

Then, eventually, there's the issue of succession. Sooner or later, the farmer or rancher sells out or bequeaths the land to an heir. Either way, the new owner might not want to lease hunting access to you or anyone else.

When a landowner pulls the plug on an annual lease, the end can come swiftly. A friend recently lost one that had been going well for years. Other hunters surreptitiously made the rancher a higher offer, and by the time the lessees learned of it, they had no fair chance to counteroffer. Overnight my friend lost access to deer land into which years of money and effort had been invested.

Of course, landowners can tell their own horror stories of hunters who, upon deciding they wouldn't be renewing their lease for the next season, shot up the herd and trashed the land on the way out the gate. That's every bit as bad.

Knowing an honest person is on the other end of a handshake is rarely more comforting than when striking a lease deal. But don't rely on just a handshake. Get it all in writing, then do your best to ensure both sides live up to the deal. Either that or start saving to buy deer ground on which you can call all the shots.

GORDON WHITTINGTON
Editor in Chief

NEW! AccuBlock® Precision 700 Composite Stocks

Stocky's
ph (561) 584-8500
America's Gunstock Specialist!

M50 - High or X-High Cheek

VG2 - Vertical Grip Comfort

Sporter - Lightweight Precision

As Low As **\$179** With AccuBlock®

Do It Yourself Drop-in Fit For all 700's

www.NewRifleStocks.com

SPEED THRILLS. ACCURACY KILLS.

TENPOINT'S NARROWEST AND
MOST ACCURATE CROSSBOW EVER.



[NEW] **STEALTH** NXT™

ULTRA-COMPACT.

6-inches axle-to-axle.

DEVASTATING SPEED.


Up to 410 feet-per-second.

MATCH-GRADE ACCURACY.

1-inch down-range groups.

WHISPER QUIET.

3x quieter than competition.

 **MADE IN AMERICA**
AKRON, OHIO



#TENPOINTCROSSBOWS

LEARN MORE AT:
WWW.TENPOINTCROSSBOWS.COM



Brainworms spread by whitetails are a threat to northeastern Minnesota's moose, which also must deal with predators, climate change and other issues. Photo by Oliver S/Shutterstock

third of the moose carcasses.

These roundworms use snails and slugs as intermediary hosts. Whitetails and moose inadvertently consume these gastropods while browsing vegetation. Brainworm larvae then hatch out in the new host and work their way through the body.

In a deer, many of the larvae end up in the lungs, after which they're coughed up and spread to the ground. There the eggs are later picked up by snails and slugs, and the parasite's life cycle begins anew. With moose, however, the worms can enter the brain, leading to death. Infested animals often spin in circles before dying.

Experts say reducing deer numbers might help reduce the brainworm problem in moose. However, deer are of far greater economic value to the region than are moose, and most sportsmen in the region favor higher deer numbers. Even among the region's native peoples, including the Grand Band of the Chippewa, there's disagreement as to how much to reduce the deer herd to help the moose population. **NAW**

MINNESOTA'S HARD CHOICE

Northeastern Minnesota is one of the few parts of the U.S. in which whitetails and moose coexist.

BY GORDON WHITTINGTON

But new research suggests the former species has become an indirect threat to the latter.

After years of wondering why Minnesota's virtually un hunted moose have declined — numbers are down from nearly 9000 in 2005 to an estimated 4000 today — a team of state and tribal

researchers placed GPS collars on some of them and tracked their movements. As collared moose died, researchers located their remains and tried to determine cause of death.

Several factors contributed, including wolf and bear predation. But many moose (including some killed by predators) had parasite infestations. Among the finding was the presence of meningeal brainworms (*Parelaphostrongylus tenuis*) in a fourth to a

FYI | ON THE WEB |

To learn more about Minnesota's efforts to help moose and whitetails coexist in the North Woods, visit: dnr.state.mn.us/moose.

YAMAHA Advocates for ACCESS



Brought to you by
Yamaha's Proven
Off-Road ATVs and
Side-by-Side Vehicles



→ Visit Yamahaoai.com to explore Yamaha's partnership potential for improved land access and responsible stewardship in your area. Together we can protect and expand access opportunities for all.



CREATURE SEEKERS

A CAMO-CLAD ADVENTURE

CONQUER THE OUTDOORS ON YOUR NEXT HUNTING TRIP AND SAVE
WITH A BUNDLED POLICY FOR YOUR AUTO AND OUTDOOR VEHICLES

PROGRESSIVE



LOOK
FOR THE
ANTLER



YOU CAN WEAR CAMO OR YOU CAN WEAR REALTREE®



The next time you go shopping for hunting gear, look for the Realtree® Antler to make sure you're purchasing the world's most effective and trusted camouflage patterns.

Don't leave your hunt up to just any camo pattern.

Find the Antler so they don't find you.

Find the Antler nearest to you by going to
REALTREE.COM/FINDTHEANTLER

Show us your Antler by using **#FINDTHEANTLER**





Kudzu, an aggressive perennial vine from Asia, continues to overwhelm whitetail habitats. Application of Tordon 101 is among the more effective controls. Photo by LightScribe/iStock

UNWELCOME GUESTS (PART 2)

In Part 1 of this series, I pointed out some negative impacts of various invasive plants on whitetail forage diversity and quality. Now

BY DR. JAMES C. KROLL

let's see what we can do to reduce those impacts.

Some invasives are native to the areas in which they're causing problems; others have been introduced. Certain native shrubs and herbaceous plants might appear to be beneficial or benign, based on the perception all native plants are useful — but some natives that once occurred in less abundance or only in specific habitats have spread, due to land-management practices.

A RANGE OF CONTROL METHODS

Practical ways in which to control unwanted plants fall into three general categories: mechanical, chemical and prescribed fire. The most expensive

are mechanical and chemical, sometimes costing hundreds of dollars to implement.

Mechanical treatments include mowing, disking, roller-chopping, chaining and mulching. The equipment used for this type of control can be as simple as a rotary mower pulled by a tractor all the way to specialized equipment equipped with a grinder or mower mounted on the front of the vehicle. These include the "skidsteer"-type machines, hydromulchers and heavy forestry equipment, such as articulated skidders with a grinder mounted up front. Such equipment is powerful enough to take down a tree of significant diameter, but it can cost upwards of \$100,000.

Other mechanical treatments involve little more than muscle power: axes, chainsaws, picks and mattocks. As one who grew up intimately famil-

iar with this method, I can say with confidence it's a time-consuming way to control vegetation. Plus, it's suitable only for eliminating a few unwanted individuals, not broad-scale habitat work on invasives.

Chemical control can be quite effective in controlling large areas of unwanted vegetation, but lack of selectivity in many instances can seriously reduce plant community diversity by killing beneficial species along with the bad ones. Some herbicides are designed to kill only specific plant groups, such as grasses, herbaceous plants and shrubs/trees. In order to kill specific species, you often must individually treat each unwanted plant by chemical injection or basal spraying. This of course increases time and cost, but it does allow you to protect beneficial species.

Over my four-plus decades of managing whitetail habitats, I've come to rely on a handful of chemicals to control invasives. These include glyphosate (e.g., RoundUp), triclopyr (Remedy), 2,4-Dichlorophenoxyacetic acid (2,4-D), picloram (Tordon) and fluzifop-p-butyl (Fusilade). Each has its unique application method and species control. There are many other herbicides, but I've found these to be most useful in managing deer habitats chemically.

There are two drawbacks to chemical treatment. First, many of these herbicides are classified as "restricted use," requiring an applicator's license. Even if a herbicide isn't listed as restricted, I always recommend a landowner or manager acquire the appropriate license and certification for using herbicides. Most state forestry or agricultural agencies offer certification training for individual landowners or commercial applicators.

Lastly, always follow label directions in using herbicides. Improper application method or rate can cause serious damage to deer habitat. A good friend once noted, "My farmer father always

measured chemicals in 'glugs,' rather than ounces." That's the wrong way to do it.

Because many native invasives have spread due to exclusion of wildfire, a properly applied prescribed burn can do wonders in reducing or controlling these plants. Again, the problem is that prescribed burning often requires training or permitting by a state agency. Liability always is an issue in conducting prescribed burns.

SPECIES-SPECIFIC MEASURES

Let's take a look at what we've used successfully to control/manage some of the more common invasives now seen in whitetail habitats. But before starting into those details, let me remind you of a simple truth: You never truly eradicate any pest plant. The best you can do is reduce its abundance and negative impacts.

Kudzu

This aggressive perennial vine was brought to the U.S. to control erosion and provide cattle forage. Viable control measures include mechanical (mowing and removal), heavy cattle grazing and chemical application.

Many herbicides have been tried against this pest, but Tordon 101 has proved to be most effective. I've never seen a situation in which prescribed fire could be of any real use for controlling kudzu.



Yaupon

Yaupon holly is a native invasive restricted to much of the South. Exclusion of fire has allowed this species to dominate understory vegetation in pine and hardwood forests. Once established, the plants are so densely packed that prescribed fire is out of the question.

I've successfully managed yaupon



Roller-chopping can be effective in reducing yaupon, an invasive holly native to the South. Photos courtesy of Dr. James C. Kroll

by using mechanical control, then prescribed fire. Roller-chopping involves pulling a large drum filled with water and armed with sharp blades through the area, using an intermediate-sized bulldozer. This crushes the understory plants but doesn't kill them, thereby protecting beneficial species. It also encourages the growth of herbaceous plants (weeds and grass), resulting in roughly a one-third browse, one-third grass and one-third weed plant composition. You then can follow with an every-other-year prescribed burn to bring the yaupon under control. Using this method, I've been able to triple the productive capacity of forests that had been choked with yaupon.

Japanese Barberry & Exotic Olives

My first exposure to barberry infestations was in upstate New York, where the understory vegetation in many areas is dominated by it. Only under conditions of whitetail overpopulation have I ever seen barberry browsed to any extent. In much of New England, the native understory vegetation has been crowded out by this invasive. When you add in autumn and Russian olive, deer habitat productivity in over 30 states has been negatively affected.

There are three ways to control these species. The cheapest involves using prescribed fire to kill back shrubs; however, if the understory has been overtaken by the invasives, there won't be enough fuel to even carry a prescribed fire. In such cases, use chemical or mechanical means to knock back the general plant population to allow fuel (grasses and natural litter) to accumulate; then follow with prescribed fire.

Mechanical control in areas not yet dominated by barberry or olive shrubs can be fairly effective. Grubbing out

individual plants or cutting them off at ground level can work, though this often requires periodic follow-up removals. If this is followed by prescribed fire at intervals of 3-5 years, you can achieve control.

Chemical treatment of individual plants with triclopyr can be effective, but again requires significant labor.

for becoming a certified herbicide applicator. It's best to make herbicide applications either in early spring or late in the growing season, to minimize impacts to native plants. (Note: I've not found glyphosate to be effective in controlling barberry or olive.)

Again, prior to using any herbicide, acquire proper permitting or licensing.

Also determine whether they're approved for forestry use in your state or area.

Some herbicides are approved for general use; other are restricted to licensed applicators. Always do your homework before using any herbicide — even one sold over the counter at your local farm-and-home center.

These control methods can be effective, but in most cases it will take some time to reduce the pest plant population. So patience is important.

Japanese Honeysuckle

This fast-growing vine has been here so long it's now widely considered to be "native." White-tails love it, and it can be an important browse in late winter and early spring. However, the vines can become overabundant, thus requiring control.

(Above) A front-mounted brush cutter such as the EZ Mow from Quick Attach will make short work of many understory invasives. (Left) The appropriate herbicide can be useful for killing problem trees on your deer land. Photos courtesy of Dr. James C. Kroll



This only works in forests where a few plants have become established. Once a dense canopy develops, use herbicides such as Tordon 101 (picloram plus 2,4-D), applied as a foliar spray not specific to these species.

I'm not providing application rates, as these can be regulated by state agencies. That's yet another reason

Based on my experience, Japanese honeysuckle is quite susceptible to glyphosate (1.5-2 percent solution) foliar spray. However, mechanical treatment only "makes it mad." You might spend years trying to eradicate a large patch of Japanese honeysuckle. A combination of prescribed burning

and herbicide application is the most effective control measure.

Bush Honeysuckle

Bush honeysuckle is a different breed of cat. Unlike Japanese honeysuckle, this woody shrub isn't a preferred browse of deer, and it can be very invasive.

Mechanical, burning and chemical control all have been used with success. Spring prescribed burns will kill the seedlings and knock back older plants, requiring repeated burns on a rotation of no more than 3-5 years.

A 20 percent glyphosate solution generally is recommended for chemical control. I've also used a mixture of triclopyr and mineral oil or diesel in a 20:80 percent mixture for individual plant treatment during the growing season.

Chinese Privet

This popular landscape plant produces fragrant spring blooms. Unfortunately, it isn't a desirable deer forage species and can completely dominate the understory.

Control is similar to methods that work for yaupon. However, chemical control often works best, as the plants tend to favor wet lowlands.

You can remove individual privet plants by digging or pulling, but this only works in lightly stocked areas prior to establishment. Mechanical treatment is useful to bring the plants into reach for chemical applications, but this also can result in multi-stem stands of the unwanted plant.

The best herbicides are glyphosate (as a concentrate type product, 41 percent) or triclopyr-diesel (as described above). You can cut shrubs at their bases and then treat the stumps with herbicide, as well.

Juniper

Several species of junipers ("cedar") can dominate drier whitetail habitats, but the most common ones causing problems are the red berry and blue berry species. Thick stands can reduce deer forage and soil moisture.

Junipers once were restricted to areas where wildfires couldn't reach

Continued on page 63



Dr. James C. Krill used a Smith & Wesson Performance Center revolver to score in South Texas last fall. Photo courtesy of Dr. James C. Krill

ANOTHER GREAT YEAR

You can't be in all places at all times. But you can certainly try.

At *North American Whitetail TV presented by Quick Attach*, we operate with the philosophy that there's strength in numbers. And in order to deliver 20 new, authentic episodes each year, we certainly need numbers. As in, numbers of exciting new hunts to share with our viewers.

During the 2017 season, our team traveled far and

wide, hunting in no fewer than a dozen U.S. states, two Canadian provinces and Mexico to make good on our promise to deliver content relevant to deer hunters and habitat managers across the whitetail's range. And deliver we did!

As of press time for this issue, the TV team had tallied 26 successful hunts in '17, which bodes well for the action we'll be airing this year. Of course, we'll also be continuing our

informative special segments on both hunting and managing whitetails.

Even more exciting is that, for the first time, through June 2018 we're airing on both Sportsman Channel and Outdoor Channel. We're thus reaching millions of new viewers who otherwise might not have an opportunity to tune in.

Entering its 15th season, *North American Whitetail TV presented by Quick Attach* is running stronger than ever, and we're grateful for the support of our many loyal viewers and sponsors. Here's to making 2018 our best year yet! **NAW**

**NOW
ON TWO
CHANNELS**

**SPORTSMAN
CHANNEL**

WEDNESDAYS
8:00 P.M.

WEDNESDAYS
11:00 P.M.

MONDAYS
9:30 A.M.

WEDNESDAYS
4:00 P.M.

**Outdoor
CHANNEL**

TUESDAYS
8:00 P.M.

WEDNESDAYS
3:00 A.M.

WEDNESDAYS
10:00 A.M.

THURSDAYS
2:00 P.M.

FRIDAYS
5:00 A.M.

(ALL TIMES EASTERN)

SPONSORS



TOTAL SOLUTIONS...



1

MAXIMIZER
PRO FORMULA
COMPLETE FEED

MAXIMIZER
Plus
DEER MINERAL

2

DEADLY DOZEN
FULL SEASON FOOD PLOT

GÉNÉRATION 2
WHITETAIL SOYBEAN BLEND

3

BEDDING IN A BAG

Switchgrass

Don Higgins Co-Owner RWWP



PROVEN RESULTS.



"Smokey" 206 6/8" of proof

Scan to find out more
about our EHD products



www.realworldwildlifeproducts.com

ONE & DONE

The 2018 bow season is many months away — but for serious archers, the plan to make that first arrow count is already in motion.

➤ Each year, it seems, more bowhunters report getting that big chance at a dream buck.

BY GORDON WHITTINGTON

And every year, these hunters are equipped with even more lethal gear than before. Combine more chances with better equipment and the result should be ever-longer lines at taxidermy shops. Yet for some reason, that doesn't seem to be the case. Making the shot remains the tipping point between sweet success and head-shaking failure, as it has since the first flint point was launched from a bent stick.

Today's best archery gear is superb. But no bow, arrow, sight, rest, release or stabilizer can help you if the broadhead is pointed in the wrong direction at the instant the shot is taken. And as all of us know, rarely will more than one shot be offered. Big whitetails don't seem to like standing broadside in bow range as you gradually "walk" a series of arrows into their vitals. Make that first one count or hope the next hunt brings a chance to redeem yourself.

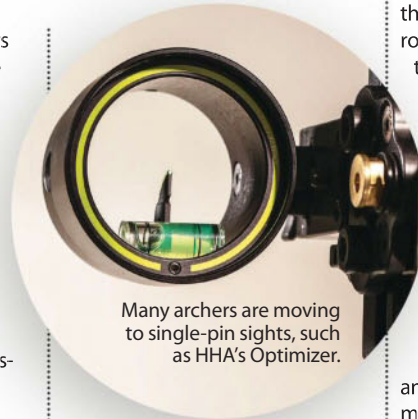
Every bowhunter has missed. It happens. But why, with today's gear and solid advice on better shooting, does it still happen as often as it does?

The answer is complex. But

part of it is that many shooters expect their gear to make the shot for them. They fail to accept that their own skills are the single most limiting factor in accuracy. When you refuse to acknowledge your own part in the equation, it's easy to find a scapegoat for disappointing results.

Learning to deliver a single arrow with as little error as possible, with the season's results on the line, should be every bowhunter's goal. It's what true practice is all about. If it isn't the focus of your preparation, your off-season shooting is little more than recreational exercise.

There are many ways to practice for that one big shot, and no single method works best for all of us. Some bowhunters love how off-season 3-D tournaments and league competition help them bear down on making perfect shots with trophies, prize money and bragging rights on the line. Others would rather shoot alone, minus the distractions that are part of any competitive shoot. But regardless of the environment in which you operate, the unifying factor in all bowhunting practice should be delivering one killing arrow. And it must be your first shot of the day, not your ninth.



Many archers are moving to single-pin sights, such as HHA's Optimizer.

Taking the "one arrow" concept to an extreme is at the core of avid northern Idaho whitetail bowhunter Troy Pottinger's preparation for trophy encounters.

"I'm a big advocate of real-life, one-shot-at-a-time practice," he says. "Out in the elements, from an elevated stand. No second chances. One shot . . . retrieve . . . one shot . . . retrieve, etc. Make your practice as much a real-world hunting application as possible. From clothing to the elements — and obviously, make every shot count."

I've tried just about every sort of practice routine myself, from shooting 100 arrows a day all spring and summer to doing what Troy does. In the process, over the years I've come to favor the single-arrow "session,"

or something close to it, over all others. And not just with a vertical bow — it also is a great way to practice with a crossbow or firearm.

If practicing on the ground, I like to walk to some spot from which I haven't shot lately, focus on drawing as cautiously as I would with a real deer in range and then shoot as quickly as I can without compromising accuracy. Sometimes I'll use a rangefinder, but often I just estimate yardage.

Many basketball coaches say, "Never end free throw practice with a miss." But whether I hit the kill zone or not, that first arrow often will be my only one of the day. Forcing myself to live with the results of a single practice shot helps drive home its importance.

Troy's point about practicing from a tree stand shouldn't be overlooked. Shoot from heights and angles that mimic what you encounter in bow season. Of course, using the type of stand you hunt from and wearing your hunting garments help, too. And finally, be just as careful as you would while hunting. Using a safety harness and lifeline when practicing also makes them easier to use during open season, especially when climbing in the dark.

Sure, it's a hassle to climb into your tree stand, shoot one arrow and then climb down to pull that shaft. But remember the goal: a good shot every time. In my experience, retrieving an arrow that hit the target's kill zone isn't nearly as tiresome as pulling one that didn't.

Shooting tight groups of course is part of tuning your setup. Start doing that now, to ensure every component of your bow setup is working right. But next fall, the outcome of your deer dream is almost certain to come down to a single arrow. If you want to save on taxidermy, practice as though it won't. **NAW**

ELITE TEMPO

With a mass weight of 4.4 pounds, an axle-to-axle length of 34" and a brace height of 7.25", the Tempo sits solidly in hand and is a predictably smooth shooter on the range and in the deer woods. Its IBO rating is 325 fps.
ELITEARCHERY.COM

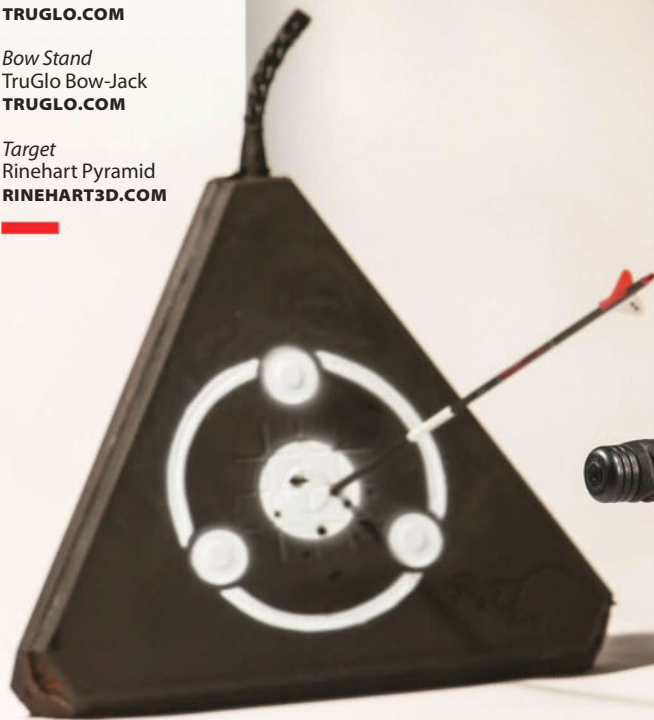
Sight
HHA Optimizer
King Pin
HHASPORTS.COM

Rest
HHA Virtus
HHASPORTS.COM

Stabilizer
TruGlo 9" Carbon XS
TRUGLO.COM

Bow Stand
TruGlo Bow-Jack
TRUGLO.COM

Target
Rinehart Pyramid
RINEHART3D.COM



BREAKING THE CURSE

ON A COLD DAY IN NORTHERN SASKATCHEWAN
LAST DECEMBER, YEARS OF TROPHY FRUSTRATION
ENDED WITH A SINGLE SHOT. BY CHRIS DE VILLIERS

The author's 2017 rifle kill has one of the greatest typical frames ever seen. The "green" gross typical score of this basic 11-pointer is a stunning 222 0/8. Photo by Jody Ruszkowski



Most whitetail careers begin in much the same way. The origin of mine was quite different. I was born in Somerset West, near Cape Town, South Africa, and I never even saw a live whitetail until after I'd begun my career as a medical doctor in Saskatchewan, Canada, a decade ago.

I still recall my conversation with the practice manager where I'd applied for work. "I only have one question," I told her. "What's the hunting like up there?"

Without hesitation she assured me, "It's the best you can get."

That immediately sold me. But upon arriving at the Saskatoon airport at midnight with the temperature around -35, I began to second-guess my decision.

LEARNING TO LOVE WHITETAILS

I remember as a young boy getting up early on Saturday mornings to watch TV for outdoors programming from North America. I was lucky to spend holidays on my grandparents' farm in South Africa. I lived for hunting from a young age, starting with a slingshot and then moving on to a rifle and eventually bow and arrow.

Within a few months of arriving in Canada, I'd met Brian Soyko, an avid hunter. Even though we'd grown up across the world from each other, we quickly realized we shared the same passion for hunting, and it didn't take long to become good friends and hunting partners. Brian's a whitetail fanatic with a great track record. In fact, he'd shot a 220-inch non-typical in 2004.

Brian offered to take me on my first whitetail hunt. And within 20 minutes of climbing into a tree stand for the first time, I'd arrowed a 160-inch buck!

This is pretty easy, I thought. But Brian quickly set me straight on that. He said it would take me another 10 years to shoot a deer that would score higher. He also told me whitetail hunting could become a total obsession.

I still remember thinking, *Yeah, it was fun, but I doubt I would be that into white-tails*. Well, that's when the curse began. And along with it, a true obsession.

Over the years that followed, I spent endless hours in the pursuit of these animals, finding new places to hunt,

putting up trail cameras and sitting in tree stands — but with no success in finding a bigger deer. My young daughters Ella and Jane accompanied me baiting and scouting, exposing them to my favorite pastime. Brian also helped me as much as he could, but toward the end of the '15 season he decided to try a different stand. He shot his second 200-class deer just 10 minutes into that hunt. The curse was still hanging over me, and I wasn't sure how to break it.



This 2015 photo shared a common trait with many other live images of the giant: It was captured under cover of darkness. The deer stayed quite nocturnal until last season's final morning. *Photo courtesy of Chris de Villiers*

A GIANT TO PURSUE

In '13, while hunting in an area not inhabited by a lot of deer, I saw a buck that had real potential. With trail cameras I watched him grow and survive season after season, though multiple other local hunters also were targeting him. He became a stud of a deer but also was becoming a ghost, only moving under the protection of darkness.

As the '17 season approached, trail cameras revealed the deer had continued to grow. He had a huge typical frame with long main beams that almost touched at the tips, as well as great mass and a few kickers to give the rack extra character. I estimated his brow tines to be nothing short of 9 inches, and his G-2s, G-3s and G-4s ranged from 9-14 inches.

Brian and I finally realized that, due to the buck's nocturnal nature, we had to start thinking outside the box. We

needed a location more likely to provide a daytime encounter. We scouted an area with great cover and what we felt would offer better chances during the rut. We placed a blind on top of a hill overlooking a willow flat. We decided to stage a rifle setup rather than bow, which is usually our weapon of choice. We didn't want to take any chances with this deer. We needed to capitalize if we ever had an encounter.

Brian and I hunted the area hard for over three weeks, but with little to show for it. We were hunting separately, due to work commitments, and some days were forced to try a different area because the wind was unfavorable.

Most days all I saw was one or two spikes, but knowing the giant was in the area made the hours go by fast. I didn't dare nod off for even a second, because I knew if a sighting were to happen, it could be quick and unexpected. While watching magpies playing around on the bait I kept telling myself, *If he walks in, stay calm, pick a spot on the vitals, keep your head down, squeeze the trigger and follow through on the shot*. I've heard of too many hunters not being able to make the shot when faced with such a deer.

I was hoping persistence eventually would pay off, but as we all know, with trophy whitetails there's no guarantee. Soon the '17 season was all but done, and still I hadn't seen the deer I was hunting. But after working all week, I decided to go out for one final try. Little did I know that Sunday, Dec. 3, would prove to be a momentous day.

ONE LAST TRY

I made the decision to hunt until lunch time. It was a crisp morning, around -18 degrees C. (4 degrees F.), with hoar frost on the brush and trees and a light southwesterly wind that was favorable for the blind. With these weather conditions, and thinking the secondary rut might be kicking in, I felt there might be some buck movement.

Out of desperation, I chose to try something different this morning, using frequent rattling and grunts. Every 10 minutes I'd call, then watch and wait. But nothing showed.

After being in the blind for two hours I thought, *This is it. Just enjoy this beautiful day, and hopefully next year*

CHRIS DE VILLIERS BUCK

| | |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| Scorable points 15 (8R, 7L) | Total length of abnormal points: 10 4/8 |
| Tip-to-tip spread 3 3/8 | |
| Greatest spread 23 6/8 | |
| Inside spread 20 0/8 | |

| Areas Measured | Right | Left | Difference |
|-----------------|----------------|---------------|---------------|
| Main Beam | 30 4/8 | 31 6/8 | 1 2/8 |
| 1st point (G-1) | 9 6/8 | 9 7/8 | 1/8 |
| 2nd point (G-2) | 12 7/8 | 14 3/8 | 1 4/8 |
| 3rd point (G-3) | 12 5/8 | 13 5/8 | 1 0/8 |
| 4th point (G-4) | 11 3/8 | 9 1/8 | 2 2/8 |
| 5th point (G-5) | 4 2/8 | — | 4 2/8 |
| 1st circ. (H-1) | 5 2/8 | 5 2/8 | — |
| 2nd circ. (H-2) | 4 7/8 | 4 6/8 | 1/8 |
| 3rd circ. (H-3) | 6 0/8 | 5 4/8 | 4/8 |
| 4th circ. (H-4) | 5 3/8 | 4 7/8 | 4/8 |
| Totals | 102 7/8 | 99 1/8 | 11 4/8 |

Gross typical score 222 0/8
 Subtract side-to-side differences - 11 4/8
 Subtract abnormal points - 10 4/8
NET TYPICAL SCORE (GREEN) 200 0/8

This northern Saskatchewan giant's "green" numbers prove he has one of the top typical frames ever.

you'll have better luck. I was already planning how to outsmart the big deer next year.

A few minutes later, I looked up to find myself face to face with the biggest white-tail I've ever seen in the flesh. He was 120 yards away and staring straight up the ridge toward my blind.

Don't move, I thought. *Wait till he looks away.* And then I mentally urged the deer, *Please don't spook.*

At that moment, he lowered his head to sniff the ground. Realizing this was my chance, I slowly raised my .30 Nosler Christensen Arms Classic II rifle and steadied it on the blind window.

With the buck's shoulder in the center of my scope, I slowly squeezed the trigger. The report of my rifle shattered the silence and shook me back to reality. The buck

ever grateful for his help. We savored this opportunity, sitting and talking and enjoying this time in the presence of such an animal.

After loading my deer, I contacted taxidermist Kent Ringheim in Melfort, telling him I had some work that would keep him busy for awhile. Kent is a friend and a true artist who's done some outstanding mounts for me. I'd always promised myself that whenever I shot a really big whitetail buck, it would be full-body mounted.

TALE OF THE TAPE

Our provincial big-game records organization, the Henry Kelsey Club, requires no drying period for antlers prior to entry. Shortly after taking my deer, I had him scored for the club by a panel of official measurers. They recorded a gross 6x5 typical frame of 222 0/8 inches, with a net of 200 0/8 after deductions for asymmetry and non-typical points. Without the abnormalities, his net typical score would have been 210 4/8. (I plan to have Boone & Crockett scoring done after that group's 60-day drying period has elapsed.)

IN CONCLUSION

I thank my beautiful wife Brigitt and my children for their continued support of my whitetail hunting, and God for placing these beautiful creatures on earth for us to enjoy and preserve. Last year was truly a blessed one for me, with the birth of my son, Ben, in August and then my shooting the deer of a lifetime in December.

I've hunted multiple species back in Africa, including greater kudu, impala, wildebeest and even Cape buffalo. But I can assure you nothing compares to the challenge and elusiveness of a mature whitetail buck. No other game can vanish forever at the slightest sign of danger and yet also appear out of nowhere just as quickly. I consider it the world's most amazing big-game animal, hands down.

As Brian had predicted back in '07, my whitetail curse took 10 years to break. Did I expect to end it with a 200-class typical? No — but I'll take it! **NAW**



While not officially scored for Boone & Crockett as of press time, the rack could contend for the exclusive "200 Club." The B&C world record is Milo Hanson's 213 5/8-incher, also shot in Saskatchewan (1993). Photo by Jody Ruszkowski

went down on the spot, struck through both shoulders with a 180-grain Nosler Accubond. I chambered another round and kept my aim on the deer, just to be sure I had him. He slowly raised his head for a moment but then laid it down again, never to move again.

The rush of emotions that came over me I still can't put into words. It felt so surreal. I slowly made my way to where the buck had fallen and looked down at him. *What a majestic animal you are,* I

thought. *A true warrior of the woods.* I just sat there and paid my last respects to this beautiful creature.

I then texted Brian two words: "Curse broken!" Unfortunately, he was working that day, and his season was done for the year. But seconds later I received a congratulatory phone call from him.

I then contacted my friend Glen Frank, another avid whitetail hunter, asking him to help me retrieve the buck and take some photos. I'll be for-

INTRODUCING THE 2018 TRIAX.

STEALTH IS LETHAL.

THE QUIETEST, MOST VIBRATION-FREE
PLATFORM WE'VE EVER BUILT.

SEE MORE AT MATHEWSINC.COM



The author used a crossbow to bag this spectacular non-typical in December 2016. Photo courtesy of Robert Ortolani

BOTH SIDES OF THE RIVER

THIS UNIQUE BUCK ROAMED FAR AND WIDE OVER THE COUNTRYSIDE OF UPSTATE NEW YORK. BUT ON A COLD DAY IN LATE SEASON, HIS TRAVELING CAME TO A SUDDEN HALT.

BY ROBERT ORTOLANI



I started my New York deer-hunting career by tagging along with my father and grandfather in the 1970s. As best I can remember, prior to 2016 I'd shot seven deer, all but two of them bucks. My three biggest had been 8-pointers. But in all those years, I'd never taken a whitetail of exceptional size.

We'd had one special buck on our trail cameras on a small patch of private land in Onondaga County since 2013. We captured images of him that fall and over the next two years, but with no actual sightings. Even as recently as the end of the regular gun season

in '16 we hadn't laid eyes on him. The town supervisor and his brother hunt private land not more than a half-mile away, and they'd never even snapped any pictures of him on their trail cameras, much less seen him. Even our photos through the years had been sparse and taken at night. We weren't even sure the deer was still alive.

My wife Holly and I own an auto repair shop, and in mid-December '16 one of the floor drains became plugged. This turned out to be an unusual break for me. The plumbers we use are also avid hunters, but from the other side of town. We like to exchange hunting stories, and when they arrived, we discussed our hunting season, etc.

MADE FOR THOSE WHO WEAR THE RED, WHITE AND BLUE.
AND ORANGE.



Trijicon AccuPower®

What we've learned from decades of deployment with America's greatest fighting forces, we've put back into our technology for America's greatest hunters.

See the new technology at [Trijicon.com/AccuPower](https://www.trijicon.com/AccuPower).

AccuPower®
LED Illumination



Then one of the guys mentioned a big non-typical with a drop tine had been sighted recently on their side of town. "Their" side meant across the Seneca River. One of my employees and hunting partner had wondered earlier in the season if perhaps the buck had been swimming the river. Based on this information, he had been — every year.

Knowing the big buck was alive at

least gave us reason to hope he might come our way. Even so, our trail cameras still showed does and small bucks only. But then, during late muzzleloader season, the weather was forecasted to make a big change. Winter was moving in.

Unfortunately, my hunting partner had to tend to expectant-father duties, so I was on my own. I pulled the camera cards around noon on Satur-

day, Dec. 17, and there the buck was: during the day on Friday and even that Saturday morning! The rack had made modest improvements between most years, but its latest burst of annual growth had been the greatest to date. At first I wasn't even sure it was the same deer, but after going through old pictures, I could see it was.

I ran home to get some lunch and my hunting gear and check my crossbow. Then out to the stand I went . . . only to see nothing the rest of the day.

At 4 a.m. the next day I awoke to driving rain. I didn't have good rain gear, but I had lawn-and-leaf bags to keep me dry, so I went anyway. Unfortunately, the morning only brought does and a spike buck by my stand.

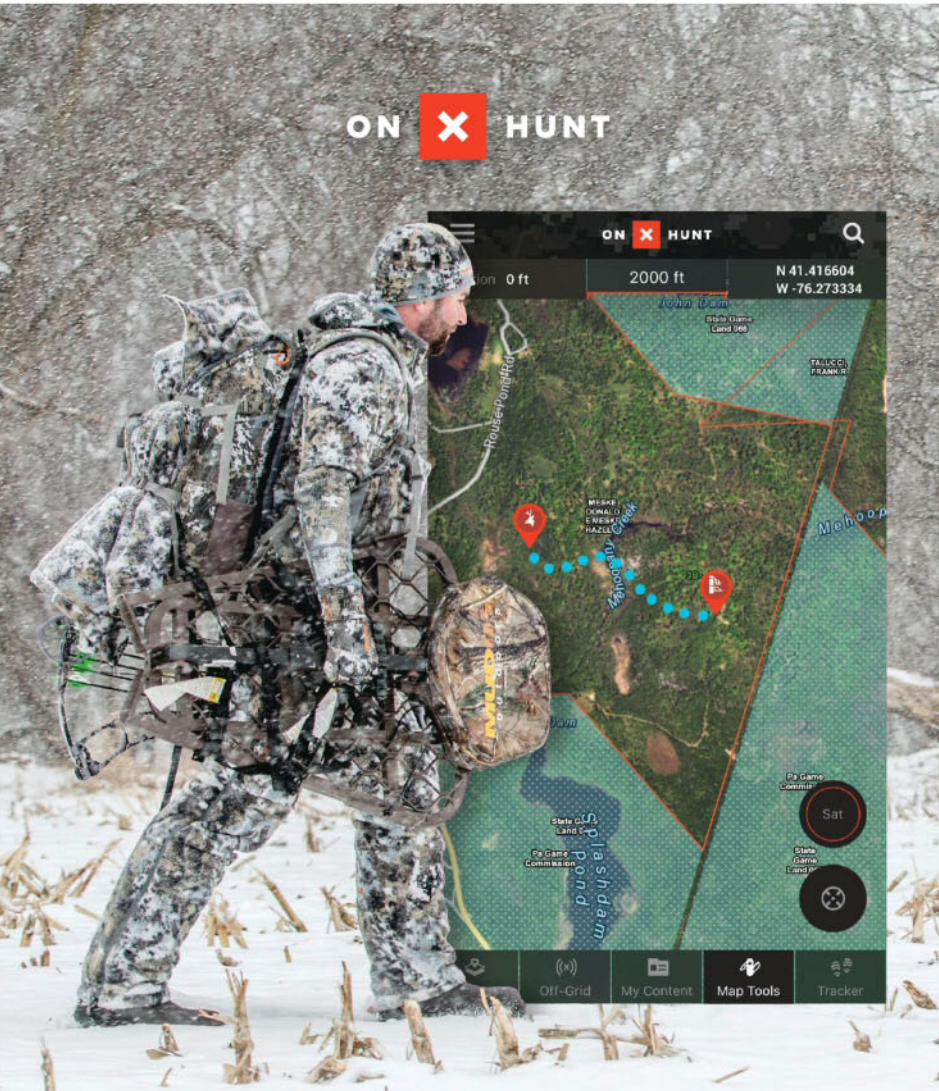
As the day went on, the rain was predicted to shift to snow, and it sure did. That afternoon hunt I saw eight does and the same spike come in: all upwind, which I thought was unusual. I figured if the big one was going to make an appearance, it was going to be from the side of my tree stand that was wide open. In that case I might not have a shot, so I tried to wriggle and twist as much as I could to cover myself.

After the does wandered off, I figured I'd better test my equipment by trying to pull up quietly on the spike. And it's a good thing I did — the crossbow was frozen to my tree stand safety bar, the scope lenses were iced over, and the battery for the LED reticle was dying! I cleared the lenses, turned off the display to conserve battery power and watched the spike wander off.

I'd made up my mind that this would be my last hunt of the year, even though the season officially closed two days later. After all, I had a business to run. It was getting late, and I was ready to call it quits when, in the same spot the spike had wandered off into, the 30-pointer appeared!

The giant was only 15 yards upwind of my stand, but I was well hidden. I'd rehearsed the routine in my mind plenty of times: reticle display on, bolt all the way back, safety off, clear shot. That's the exact sequence I followed, and when I shot, the deer went down in his tracks!

What I'd never given any thought to was the next step: nervously reloading



Public & Private Land Boundaries

Discover color-coded private landowner names and property boundaries, as well as city, state and federally owned public lands and how to access them. Property owner info is updated yearly to keep up with constant ownership changes.

Download Today



For more information about the onX Hunt App go to onXmaps.com/hunt

NorthAmericanWhitetail.com

my crossbow in a tiny tree stand while trying to jam a big boot into a small stirrup as I dealt with snow and ice. The deer was struggling to regain his feet, and I feared he was going to run away, never to be found.

I finally managed to re-cock the bow. Unfortunately, as I grabbed another bolt, I inadvertently knocked my quiver and last arrow to the ground 12 feet below! Now what?

At this point I sat back down and tried to call for help on my cell phone. But it was frozen solid and wouldn't work. I kept a watchful eye on the buck and finally warmed the cell phone up enough to send out some help requests.

My son and his friend finally showed



8F-13C



12-16-2016 09:10:33

ROBERT ORTOLANI BUCK

Scorable points 30 (11R, 19L)
 Tip-to-tip spread 7 6/8
 Greatest spread 22 4/8
 Inside spread 18 0/8

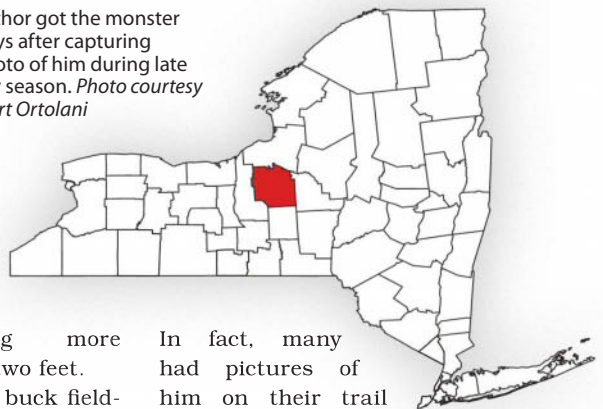
Total length
 of abnormal
 points: 77 0/8

| Areas Measured | Right | Left | Difference |
|-----------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| Main Beam | 18 2/8 | 24 5/8 | 6 3/8 |
| 1st point (G-1) | 6 0/8 | 8 0/8 | 2 0/8 |
| 2nd point (G-2) | 11 5/8 | 12 0/8 | 3/8 |
| 3rd point (G-3) | 6 3/8 | 9 6/8 | 3 3/8 |
| 4th point (G-4) | — | 3 0/8 | 3 0/8 |
| 1st circ. (H-1) | 5 1/8 | 5 2/8 | 1/8 |
| 2nd circ. (H-2) | 4 7/8 | 4 6/8 | 1/8 |
| 3rd circ. (H-3) | 3 2/8 | 6 0/8 | 2 6/8 |
| 4th circ. (H-4) | 2 1/8 | 3 6/8 | 1 5/8 |
| Totals | 57 5/8 | 77 1/8 | 19 6/8 |

Gross typical score 152 6/8
 Subtract side-to-side differences - 19 6/8
 Add abnormal points + 77 0/8
FINAL NET NON-TYPICAL SCORE 210 0/8

Robert downed this buck in December 2016, during late archery season in Onondaga County, New York.

The author got the monster two days after capturing this photo of him during late archery season. Photo courtesy of Robert Ortolani



moving more than two feet.

The buck field-dressed only 150 pounds, and had no fat on him at all. The butcher thought he could have been 220-230 pounds pre-rut, but who knows? The taxidermist determined his age to be 6 1/2 years, which is really old for a whitetail around here.

The final tally on the deer's

In fact, many had pictures of

him on their trail cameras or at least knew someone who did. Most of the sightings were from the other side of the river, but probably not over two miles away from my land, as the crow flies. This deer made the most of his habitat and knew how to hide well, as there's a lot of development within the area he roamed.

Interestingly, when my son and I were dragging the deer out, he asked if I thought it was a good idea to pull on the antlers. I said, "Sure. These things never fall off." Well, not 10 feet later, the right antler popped free of the deer's head! He obviously was on the verge of shedding.

Fortunately, at the 2017 spring meeting of the Northeast Big Buck Club, that group officially agreed to recognize my deer as a hunter kill, rather than simply as a set of shed antlers. As far as I can determine, my deer is now the all-time No. 4 non-typical from New York, including not only hunter kills but also bucks found dead. **NAW**

up, and I still wasn't convinced 100 percent that the buck wouldn't run off. So they came in from one direction, and I climbed down at the same time. At least we'd now have three sets of eyes on the buck if he did get up and run off. Fortunately, the one shot was somehow a good one, and that's all it took. He never ended up

unique rack was 229 6/8 inches gross and 210 0/8 net, as scored by a group led by official measurer Terry Stoddard. The measurements included over 72 inches of non-typical growth!

After word of the buck's demise got around town, many people began to contact me on social media. It's amazing how many locals knew of the deer.

PLOTS

THAT PULL

There are countless food plots sprinkled across the whitetail's range. But how many of them really produce as intended?

BY GORDON WHITTINGTON

CAMERAMAN JUSTIN Fabian and I had been in the pop-up blind maybe 20 minutes when it happened. The time was 2:30 p.m. on Nov. 10, 2017, and the location was a small creekside food plot on my 150-acre farm in Putnam County, Missouri.

As I gazed out one of the blind's windows, a mature doe walked into view on the plot's far edge. From the instant I saw her, she was looking intently in our direction. But I was sure she didn't suspect human danger — because her eyes were locked on another deer. At least, what she *thought* was another deer. Our Dave Smith buck decoy was standing 28 yards in front of the blind, and the doe's entry point into the plot had, by sheer happenstance, put the fake whitetail directly between her and us. She was wondering exactly which new buck had invaded her area.

"Where's your boyfriend?" I whispered as I slowly reached for my TenPoint crossbow.

A moment later, that question was answered. The doe's suitor, a wide 9-pointer, popped out on the same trail she had and began staring even more intently at the decoy.

"Shooter," I whispered to Justin as he eased his finger to the video camera's "record" button.

I try not to laugh when I hear a hunter claim no buck trailing a "hot" doe will ever leave her for any reason. Fact is, in the face of perceived competition for breeding honors, many will

When mature bucks feel safe using a plot in daylight during open season, you're clearly doing something right. *Photo by Ryan Yoder*





move away from her briefly to threaten or even whip a challenger. And that's evidently what this buck intended to do with the fake one standing before him.

Seconds later, the real buck was running away with an Easton carbon shaft in his lungs. Even as he crashed to earth just off the edge of the plot, a young 7-pointer began displaying his own fascination with the decoy. In fact, he stood only a few feet until Justin and I exited the blind to follow the short blood trail to the deer I'd shot.

It always feels good to fill an archery tag with a solid buck, but especially on the last afternoon before gun season. And of course, taking a good one on your own land never gets old. To have done it in a plot put there just for that purpose was antlered icing on the cake.

THE POINT OF PLANTING

We plant food plots in hopes deer will eat them. That's self-evident. But the reason we want them eaten can vary from place to place, season to season and person to person.

Sometimes we're mainly concerned about the welfare of the deer herd. We're into healthy wildlife and habitat and want to see both thrive. So we look at our options and figure that if we can find a practical, cost-effective way to increase prime forage on the land, we might as well go for it.

To this end, warm-season annuals such as cowpeas, forage soybeans and lablab have become popular plantings in many parts of whitetail country. These large-seeded legumes provide literally tons of highly digestible, high-protein forage per acre from late spring on into fall. While some early-season hunting is done over such plots (particularly in the South), for the most part they're used for general herd nutrition.

Of course, the driving force behind most habitat tweaks — planting plots included — is to lure deer for harvest, not just to make them fat and happy. These "kill" plots most often are cool-season annuals (winter-hardy oats, winter wheat, rye, triticale, Austrian winter peas, rape, turnips, etc.), and they're placed where deer should feel reasonably comfortable venturing into them during shooting hours. While the

This husky northern Missouri 9-pointer followed a doe into a small food plot last November but then detoured over to the author's buck decoy. That was a fatal mistake. *Photo by Justin Fabian*



nutrition offered can boost herd health, it isn't the main reason for their use.

Some perennials, such as alfalfa, chicory and clovers, of course serve both purposes. But the vast majority of whitetail plots today are planted to annuals, whether in spring or late summer/fall.

AVOIDING PLOT FAILURE

Plot problems can take any number of forms. Some seeds never even germinate. Others sprout but then don't survive nature's assault of drought, cold, shade, flooding, weed competition, disease, insects or incorrect soil pH.

Long before planting, do your homework to determine adequate growing conditions for a given crop — then make a full effort to meet those requirements through sensible site selection, soil

preparation and timing of planting. To do otherwise is to ask for major trouble, in the form of forage failure.

Planting a seed blend is a common hedge against a plot disaster. All else being equal, the more varieties of seeds you plant, the better the chance at least one will thrive. Then again, the more you plant, the more likely it is not all will perform as hoped.

I avoid mixing large and tiny seeds in the same planting pass. Large seeds need to be planted deeper than small ones do. Planting cowpeas or oats an inch deep, covering them with soil, then broadcasting tiny seeds such as clover and chicory on top before cultipacking, yields better results across the board.

Weather matters. On that Missouri plot I hunted last fall, land partner Tommy Witt had had to cope with extra-dry soil when planting the Real World Wildlife Products Deadly Dozen mix. That

made site preparation tough. Even so, by mid-fall that plot had grown well enough to lure quite a few deer.

If nothing ends up getting shot in a plot, some hunters will feel it a waste. But that's a mental trap we'd all do well to avoid. Some of the most helpful plots rarely, if ever, are kill sites. Only after assessing your management and hunting goals can you decide if a plot is a bust or not.

Sometimes we're playing the long game. In Missouri, I've often paid for plantings I not only never hunted, I never even *saw* before they were turned under. Why? To give deer places they could count on as secure feeding spots after local farmers had harvested their beans and corn. I figured my plots — primarily Buck Forage oats with a few turnips and Austrian winter peas mixed in — would imprint those places on the brains of all deer in the valley.

I can't tell you if this played a role in my success in one of the cool-season plots last fall. All I know is that the buck I shot hadn't yet been born the last time I'd hunted it, which was in '09. During this 8-year span the bottom next to the plot had grown into thick cover, giving deer a private dining room to use at their leisure all fall and winter. No wonder the plot was so full of tracks.

I feel the presence of big crop fields west and north of the farm reduces my need to grow warm-season plots. It would be tough to compete with those hundreds of acres of beans and corn. But as those crops get cut each fall, and as the acorn crop on the surrounding ridges starts to play out, deer shift back into the adjacent creek bottom and begin to focus more on my plots. By the time the November rut hits, much of the best forage in the vicinity is on my farm. That makes it an intersection of deer activity.

In intensively farmed areas, many hunters and landowners still feel there's no reason to plant food plots. But as Dr. James Kroll has often noted in our pages, farm country can offer slim pickings once the crops are out. Today's



When the author checked the Missouri plot to hunt it for the first time in years, he found some encouraging sign. Photo by Gordon Whittington

harvest machinery leaves relatively little waste grain on the ground.

As farmland deer retreat into woodlots and creek bottoms after crops are cut, they often find themselves hurting for food. There's shelter from the weather, but not enough good forage to hold the herd over for the rest of winter. In such places, well-planned plots of the right plants suddenly can become the hottest feeding areas around.

TOO MUCH PRESSURE?

Sometimes forage is being eaten well enough but not *when* we'd prefer,

which is during daylight hours in open season. Maybe that's due to the plot location being too exposed, but at least as often, hunting pressure is the real culprit.

How hard a plot is pounded is often the difference between hunting success and failure. No matter how lush a plot or where it's located, hunting it wrong will shift nearly all feeding to nighttime. So go to extremes to make deer feel safe using your plots in daytime. That can mean curtailing hunting right on a plot or too frequently checking trail cameras hung over edge scrapes. Tread lightly.

IN CONCLUSION

Nobody knows how many acres of plots are planted each year, but I suspect it's an area larger than some northeastern states. Dozens of types of crops are used, with results ranging from awesome to awful.

In the long run, the first goal should be to have more and healthier deer on your land as much of the year as possible, of course including hunting season. The second should be to make them feel comfortable enough that they'll regularly feed in your plots — or at least, spend a fair bit of time on their feet near them — during legal shooting light. With the right plot plan in place, both goals are attainable. **NAW**



ROOT OF ALL EVIL

ACROSS AN ever-expanding chunk of the whitetail's range, food plotters now find themselves facing a problem that can make it harder to grow good forage. That problem

comes in the form of feral hogs, which view plots as their very own messy dinner tables.

Wild hogs love to root freshly tilled soil for earthworms and have such keen noses they can detect recently planted seeds below the surface. The result can be major rearranging of the soil in a plot and a partial loss of the crop shortly after planting. Hogs also will continue to hit the growing plot, and often their presence discourages deer use.

To that end, *North American Whitetail* now occasionally publishes a unique title called *Hog Hunting*. Each issue contains great tips on identifying and dealing with hog problems on deer properties. If you have these animals in your area or fear you soon might, *Hog Hunting* is a must-read. Our latest issue is now on newsstands throughout the heart of feral hog territory.





THE HURT LOCKER

JEREMY RENNER | ANTHONY MACKIE | BRIAN GERAGHTY

RULE NUMBER ONE: STAY ALIVE

WINNER OF 6 OSCARS® INCLUDING BEST PICTURE

**BIG SHOT
SATURDAYS**

02.10 VERTICAL LIMIT

02.17 CLIFFHANGER

02.24 QUIGLEY DOWN UNDER

03.03 THE HURT LOCKER

EVERY SATURDAY NIGHT
8P ET

Outdoor
CHANNEL





The buck Travis Links shot in 2016 is noteworthy not just for his antlers and cape, but also his intriguing history. The 16-point rack nets 170 4/8 non-typical. Photo courtesy of Clifford Neames

A LUCKY LOSS

SOMETIMES LETTING A BIG BUCK GET AWAY PROVES A BLESSING IN DISGUISE. JUST ASK LOUISIANA BOWHUNTER TRAVIS LINKS. BY CLIFFORD NEAMES

MANY OF US KNOW the feeling. A trophy buck shows up. You take the shot. But then, you realize things have gone sour.

For Travis Links, that was how the 2013 Louisiana bow season opened: with a lost deer. But rather than accept defeat, he became determined to finish what he'd started.

Travis has been bowhunting since he was 17 years old. He practices out to 80 yards regularly. But in the second weekend of that season he blew what he calls a "chip shot" of just 25 yards on a nice double-throat-patch 9-pointer in the 130-inch class. That shot hit high above the vitals, resulting in the nickname of "Scar" for the buck. What Travis didn't know then was that three years later he'd finally be wrapping his hands around what had become a giant non-typical rack!

GROUP DEER MANAGEMENT

Travis and a small group, including his father and best friend, had agreed to shoot only mature bucks and does on their 500-acre hunting lease in West Feliciana Parish. This is one of the better deer areas in Louisiana; the hills and hollows there have been producing great bucks for many years. Fortunately, hunters on surrounding lands share the same management philosophy. So trophy hunting

Performance Center[®] by Smith & Wesson[®]



1000+ YARD CAPABLE M&P10 6.5 CREEDMOOR



PERFORMANCE WHEN IT MATTERS MOST

⊕ 15" TROY[®] FREE-FLOAT RAIL WITH M-LOK[®]

⊕ 2-STAGE MATCH GRADE TRIGGER

⊕ MAGPUL[®] MOE[®] PLUS GRIP

⊕ 5R RIFLING

⊕ 20" MATCH GRADE THREADED BARREL

⊕ AMBIDEXTROUS FIRE CONTROLS

⊕ RIFLE LENGTH GAS SYSTEM

⊕ MAGPUL[®] MOE[®] RIFLE STOCK

*OPTIC & ACCESSORIES NOT INCLUDED

SMITH-WESSON.COM/PC

a tract of 500 acres is workable, and seeing 130- to 140-inch bucks isn't unusual. The deer population is also high enough that during a hunt you might see a number of animals. And these days, shooter bucks show up on trail cameras often enough to keep things interesting.

Hunting a specific buck of course can be a formidable task, made even more difficult when he goes nocturnal. And Scar did exactly that after the failed shot. Despite numerous trail camera photos clearly showing he'd not only recovered but was thriving, he wasn't spotted again in daylight over the next two years. The scar in his coat marked the healed wound, and his rack was a little larger with an almost identical frame each year. There were also two prominent points beginning to develop at the bases of his antlers. All this made it easy to identify him in pics, and he seemed to be hanging out in two small areas of the lease.

During the '14 season Travis still had Scar on his mind, but a nice non-typical with a third main beam came along in the meantime. The latter buck was too good to pass up, so Travis shot him. That meant Scar would be off-limits to him if he showed up later in the year, as club rules allow each member to shoot only one trophy buck and one cull each season. Fortunately for Travis, Scar never gave any other member a shot at him. By season's end, it was clear this deer was going to be a worthy adversary.

Travis decided to become a full-time bowhunter at the beginning of the '15 season. He was still after Scar, but the buck remained too elusive. While he showed up regularly in trail cam pics, he was a creature of the night. By the end of that season, Travis had taken but a single deer, a doe.

During summer '16, a few bucks in a bachelor group began making appearances in a small field no one had been hunting. The area had been clipped in preparation for use as a food plot but



never planted. Over time it had grown up in high weeds, making deer trails easy to spot. After the bachelor group began showing up, a stand was placed there and Travis added a pile of rice bran just in front of the stand.

By October, the group of bucks was consistently using the area. One of the deer was a heavy-framed buck, but not the one Travis was after. After being a camera hog for so long, Scar suddenly had disappeared.

ANOTHER GIANT?

Travis sent his dad in to hunt the new stand on opening weekend, in hopes he could take the oldest buck in the group. The target animal never showed near the stand on that hunt. But right as daylight faded, Travis' dad saw a very large deer ease into the other end of the field. At that distance, in poor light, all that could be determined was

that it was a buck. The hunter patiently waited on stand until the deer left, then got down and slipped out.

The first weekend on the lease ended, just as in earlier seasons, with Scar remaining invisible. But on Wednesday of the following week, a new player

Using rice bran to lure bucks to his trail camera paid off big for Travis as the 2016 bow season got under way in West Feliciana Parish. A huge buck with a double beam antler began hitting the feed. *Photo courtesy of Travis Links*

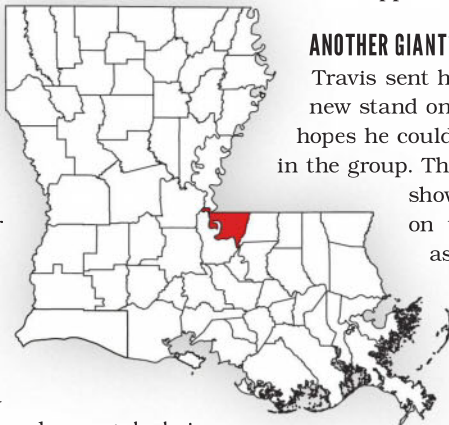
entered the game. Another member on the lease pulled the card from his trail camera near the stand and sent those photos to Travis. From these it was clear a giant non-typical had joined the bachelor group. He was coming to the rice bran feeding site every evening and even hanging around, bedding directly in front of the stand on occasion. After chewing his cud for a while, he'd walk back to the rice bran and eat again.

This news prodded Travis into immediate action. The buck's massive rack earned him the nickname "Zeus," and with his appearance the hunt for Scar was moved to the back burner.

Travis was so excited he stayed up most of that night and left work at noon the next day. He met with friend A.J. Daigle for a quick lunch, and together they planned how to best get into the stand without spooking the huge newcomer buck.

A PLAN COMES TOGETHER

By 1:45 p.m., Travis was in his stand and ready. Typical of early bow season, it was a warm, slightly overcast day with not much breeze. Travis had a video camera with him in the tree and



was planning to record the bowhunt, if possible.

The afternoon dragged along with no action. But then, just as light was beginning to fade, Travis noticed a big buck entering the field.

Zeus was standing 85 yards away, but even at that distance he looked massive. The giant was moving very slowly, and it became obvious that video wasn't going to happen as it grew darker and darker. When the deer got to just under 50 yards, Travis was ready to take the shot. He drew, settled the pin on the top of the heart and touched the release.

At the shot, Zeus whirled and left the field. The flight of the arrow had looked good to Travis, but he couldn't tell if it had actually found the mark. So he got out of the stand and walked out quietly. He called A.J. and his wife to tell them he'd shot Zeus, then went to meet up with his dad.

The men walked back to the camp, met the other hunters on the lease and relayed the story. A.J. had shot a hog, so the decision was made to find it before

heading out to trail the big deer.

Recovery of the hog took about an hour, during which Travis' anxiety level was building. When the time arrived, the decision was also made to bring along a blood-trailing dog (legal in Louisiana). As the group of six hunters entered the field, the dog led the way.

It was determined quickly that the buck was mortally wounded; in fact, he'd made it just 30 yards out of the field before collapsing. Lying there on the ground, Zeus looked even larger than expected. The 16-pointer's beams weren't long, at only 19 inches, but the extra points and great mass made up an exceptional rack.

The next day, Travis and the others began to realize there was something familiar about the antlers, as well as that double throat patch. The main frame was nearly identical to that seen in earlier trail cam pictures of Scar, and what had been "knots" at the base of the rack could have grown into the roughly 9-inch extra points.

Now convinced Zeus was the final and far bigger version of Scar, Travis

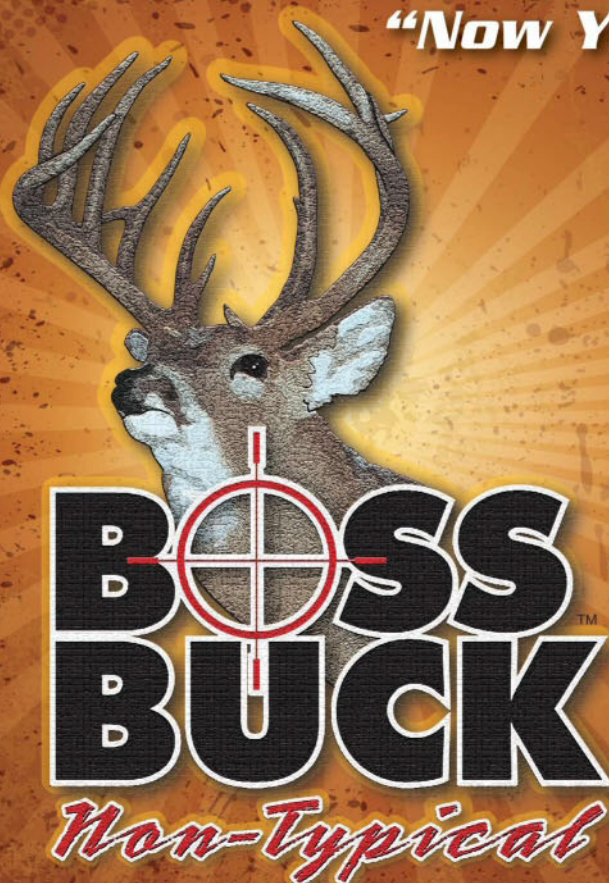
called the taxidermist. The original plan had been to possibly do a full-body mount, so to that point the deer hadn't been caped out. The phone call and a little investigation of the carcass confirmed Zeus once had been wounded high above the shoulder. Scar and Zeus clearly were the same deer, with a tremendous amount of additional antler now adorning his head.

It's estimated the buck had added roughly 30 new inches in his last year. The two extra points off the bases were now accompanied by a third beam on the right antler, pushing the official score to 170 4/8 inches. Zeus was aged at 6 1/2 and weighed 240 pounds on the hoof: hefty for a forest buck in that part of the state.

IN CONCLUSION

Trail cameras played a huge role in taking this deer. The mount is extremely impressive. But the relationship among this group of hunters and the way they all worked together are as special as the trophy. We should all be so lucky! **NAW**

"Now You're Gettin' Serious"



- Feeders • Blinds
- Coolers • Accessories

Available at



Cabela's

DEALER LOCATOR
BOSSBUCK.COM

BY
DAN
COLE

To some, finding even a single shed seems all but impossible. So how do a few antler addicts gather piles of them every year? By having a good plan, a good eye and putting in the miles.

The winter doldrums have set in for most of us. As a longtime shed hunter, I know I'm not alone in wanting to hit the trails for fresh antlers.


With the hunting media's increased acknowledgment of this off-season activity, it's begun to interest a lot of deer hunters who previously hadn't been into it. For that reason, today we see a lot of shed hunters looking for basic tips to help them get started in this great off-season pursuit. So here, in simplest form, are some ideas that will not only help the beginner but can also remind the seasoned antler hound what he or she might be missing.

KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

First off, be aware of the rules. When it comes to shed hunting, several U.S. states and Canadian provinces have restrictions and laws to be aware of and follow. Some parts of the West now even have restricted dates for shed hunting, ostensibly to minimize stress on wintering wildlife.

So before you go, always be sure you're doing everything legally. I highly recommend you call a local wildlife law enforcement center and ask pertinent questions about picking up sheds within that jurisdiction. Some regulations might surprise you, such as a prohibition against retrieving sheds

NEEDLES IN THE HAYSTACK

A photograph showing a shed antler lying on a path of snow in a field of dry, yellowish-brown grass. The antler is dark brown with a lighter, yellowish tip. The path of snow is irregular and runs through the grass. In the background, there are bare trees and a dark, wooded area. The lighting is bright, suggesting a sunny day.

Many sheds fall along trails linking winter bedding and feeding areas. But capitalizing on that knowledge takes time and effort. *Photo by Denver Bryan*



This big pair was dropped together on a poplar ridge. But in the majority of cases, only one side of a set ever is located. *Photo courtesy of Dan Cole*

from public land.

If you're planning to use a dog for shed hunting, I recommend you not even go until you know *exactly* what the laws are in the state or province you want to search. Crossing state/federal lines might mean filling out specific paperwork and/or having your dog tested.

Another thing that might not be legal in your area is picking up a "deadhead" (a deer skull with at least one antler still attached). Several U.S. states and most Canadian provinces are very strict concerning deadhead possession, so don't just assume you can freely haul home that skull you find. I can't stress this enough: Know the law!

TRAIN YOUR EYES

Despite what some might claim, spotting antlers isn't a result of natural ability. I do know many shed hunters who can spot them sticking out of the snow from a stupendous distance, but this is nothing more than a learned skill. It's simply a matter of learning to recognize what you're looking for.

As we all know, fresh sheds can really blend in with leaf litter and brush around them. Spotting them takes practice. I've found tossing a shed

around and retrieving it can help train my eyes to identify the difference between an antler point and a branch.

It's also a great way to condition the eyes to see that subtle difference in the color of an antler versus surrounding ground clutter, or to pick out the curve of the beam as it wraps around a stick. It all helps. If you find you're having trouble spotting antlers, try this little practice trick.

SEARCH THE TRAILS

Deer trails are the most important connections for locating antlers. It's vital that you walk every trail within an area if you want to find as many sheds as possible. This is especially true if you have target sheds in mind.

Most trails are simply connections between food and security/thermal cover. When I'm shed hunting in a new area, the first thing I look for is main trails. My intent is to follow them as far as access will allow. These routes will show me everywhere the local deer have been during the winter. I'll learn where they've been feeding and bedding. I can learn all this by simply following the trails.

Never underestimate the importance

of walking every trail from start to finish. Most sheds should be located along trails somewhere between bedding and feeding locations.

SOUTHERN EDGES

Any area offering cover and/or terrain features to reduce a cold north wind and provide a sun-filled bedding area must be considered prime for sheds. For instance, the southern front of a tree line that edges a winter food source is a great place to find antlers. These places are regularly used as bedding areas because of the extra warmth being in the sun and out of the wind provides. If a location can provide those two elements and cover at the same time, you can confidently assume there will be sheds nearby. I always begin my search within the area that receives the most direct sunlight and work back into heavier cover from that point.

DON'T GET AHEAD OF YOURSELF

This one gets me every time! Although I certainly know better, I often find myself focusing my attention 20-50 yards around me and forgetting to look directly around my feet. I couldn't count the number of stories I've heard from fellow shed hunters who either stepped

directly on unseen sheds — including some that were giants — or even stepped completely *over* them, only to have buddies point out the embarrassing misses to them after the fact.

Believe it or not, I once stepped completely over a medium-sized moose shed without seeing it. If I hadn't hit it with my walking stick as I swung it forward, I never would have known it was there. A whitetail antler is of course far easier to miss.

Look for sheds in every little place you can think of. But in the process, be vigilant as to what might be right in your direct line of sight. We're all going to miss some sheds, that much we know — but to put in all those days and miles, only to fail to see an antler lying practically underfoot, is tough to swallow. So don't forget to look down once in a while.

WHAT LIES BEHIND

It's always humbling to revisit an area from year to year and find bleached, chewed sheds we'd previously missed. Assuming they were there all along, how did we walk right past them?

There are several reasons for missing antlers, but the single most common is the angle of the sun. Sunlight plays tricks with shadows, and it certainly plays tricks with sheds. I recommend frequently looking behind you as you search. The more often you do so, the more sheds you'll find. Another way to do this is to walk a trail, then turn around and walk it again in the opposite direction.

Even the most well-conditioned eye will miss some sheds; it's just part of the game. But by frequently taking a second or two to glance behind you as you work an area, you can minimize those misses.

ROAD GLASSING

This is a technique I use a lot during early winter. Glassing fields is not only an efficient way to cover a lot of ground with your eyes, it's the ethical thing to do when deer are stressed from the weather. Always try to avoid bumping such deer in the search for antlers.

Good optics are a must, as is a good dose of patience. Each year I spend many hours glassing food sources and



(Above) The author had to leave this huge rack where it lay, due to a regulation against retrieving "deadheads."
(Below) Remember to look back often, or you could miss some prizes. *Photos courtesy of Dan Cole*



any connecting trails. This is something that can be done every day, if time is available. But you must stay at it; an empty field today might have a half-dozen sheds lying in it tomorrow. Big sheds can stick out in open fields, and most antlers that fall with their points sticking upward are prime candidates to be seen with meticulous glassing.

Obviously, it's challenging to spot antlers in a field of picked corn stubble or sunflowers. However, if you come across a field of soybean stubble, winter wheat, sugar beets or potatoes, larger sheds can stick out like the proverbial sore thumb.

Of course, permission must be secured before retrieving any found sheds. This applies not just to spotting

them from the road but in any other situation. And don't think sending your dog onto someone else's land to pick up an antler is OK. In Iowa, for instance, if your dog crosses onto property you don't have permission to shed hunt, any antler the dog finds there must be left on that side of the property line.

BEDDING AREA RULES

Again, don't pressure winter-stressed deer! With this in mind, bedding areas should be off-limits until early spring, after winter has lost its grip, or after the deer have moved out of the area for whatever other reason.

I won't devote much discussion to bedding areas, simply because every region and habitat type will offer a



Thorough glassing can reveal sheds in fields. But if the snow's deep or crops remain, walking is the way to find them. *Photo courtesy of Dan Cole*

unique set of bedding options. It would take up far too much space to try to cover them all here. But if you have some familiarity with a location, you probably already have a good idea where at least some bucks like to bed.

Once you're certain it's ethical to enter the bedding area, it's time to slow way down and scrutinize everything that catches your eye. Most bedding areas are within thick cover and offer some type of tall grass or other thermal quality. Sheds can be easy to miss when they fall into grass, so take your time and cover the area very well. There's a reason the majority of sheds found each year remain as singles, rather than matched sets. There's also a reason many sheds in grassy areas only turn up after fire (intentional or otherwise) removes the cover that had been hiding them.

WORK COVER IN GRIDS

Using a grid pattern to cover an area thoroughly is a great technique when searching CRP, large woodlots or wilderness locations without obvious edges. It's harder to remember where you've searched when everything

looks the same. Dividing up such areas into small squares of, say, 50x50 feet and searching each grid until you've covered them all thoroughly is a great way to work these spots.

On open ground that doesn't show our tracks, it's far too easy to forget where we've been or to simply follow a deer trail out of a good area, thus increasing the likelihood of leaving a large section of cover unchecked. Breaking the area into small, manageable squares helps keep us focused and ensures we cover that location very well. Using a grid is also a great strategy for locating a wanted match to an already found single antler.

TAKE THE FAMILY

Shed hunting is a perfect way to introduce kids or a non-hunting spouse to the outdoors. If that's your plan, just remember this one simple rule of thumb: Make it fun! If your shed partners aren't enjoying themselves, you can be sure what the answer will be the next time you ask them to go along. So pack a big lunch, maybe throw the grill into the pickup, bring plenty of family-friendly beverages and have a

good time outdoors.

Obviously, you want any newcomer to shed hunting to have some success. If you have any doubts about actually finding sheds on the trip, don't feel guilty about planting a couple antlers in an area where you know they'll be found with a little direction. For less than you might think, you can buy a handful of small "craft" antlers on eBay. This minor investment will go a long way toward creating the interest needed to ensure you have future shed-hunting partners.

THE SINGLE BEST TIP

After decades of serious shed hunting, the best advice I can offer is, "Get out there and do it! Just get going!" You'll never find a shed from your couch. Shut off all the distractions and focus on the principles of success, as outlined above. Just say no to the excuses, lace up your boots and go find some bone. **NAW**

FYI | ON THE WEB |

FYI: The author has written an e-book on shed hunting. For downloading information, visit: thewhitetailshooters.com.

NOCKTURNAL™

LIGHTED NOCKS

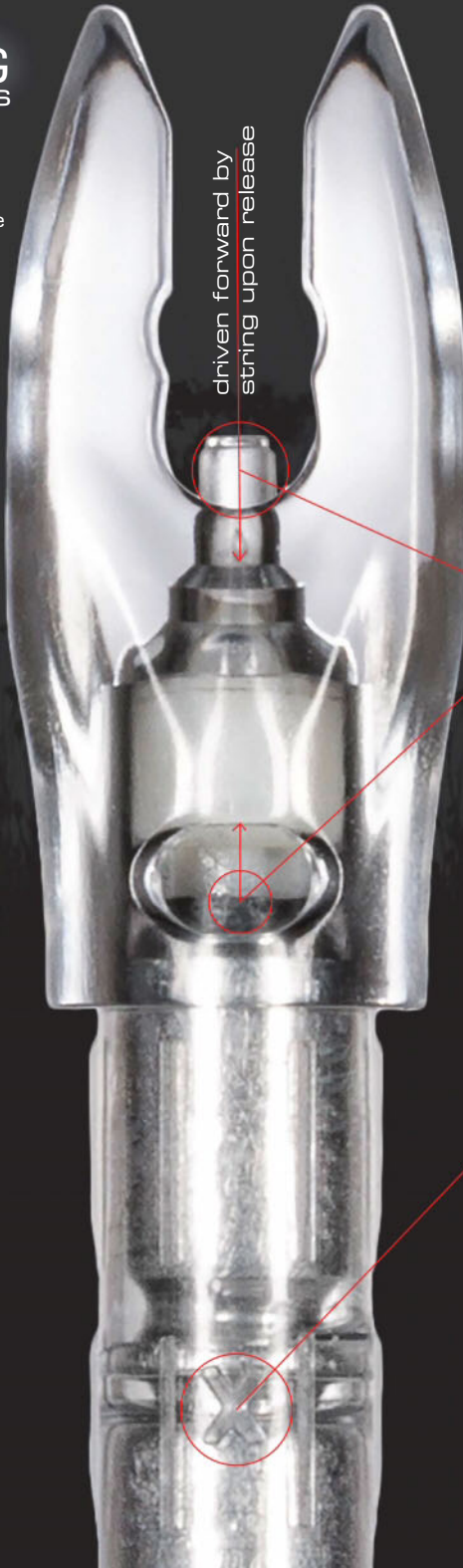
UNIVERSAL FIT

By *Rage*

brighter
STROBING
colors



brighter
SOLID
colors



NOCKTURNAL™

LIGHTED NOCKS By *Rage*

Nockturnal lighted nocks are a breakthrough design that combines ultra-light performance with a high visibility light source and "instant-on" simplicity that activates upon release. The patented, string-activated "hidden linear switch" is protected deep within the nock and will not turn on or off inadvertently. Turn the LED off by locating the "reset hole" on the side of the nock and slide the interior switch away from the arrow.

Fit BUSHINGS

Press proper nock bushing into arrow shaft to verify you have the correct bushing size. Bushing should press securely into shaft.



no bushing needed for X sized arrow

* DESIGNED TO FIT ALL BUT "G" SIZED ARROWS



NOCKTURNAL.COM



WATCH THOUSANDS OF THE WORLD'S BEST OUTDOOR TV EPISODES. RIGHT NOW.



MyOutdoorTV is the all-new app that's powered by the worldwide leader in outdoor TV: Outdoor Channel and Sportsman Channel. Choose from thousands of fishing, hunting and shooting episodes, plus how-to videos and even wild game recipes. Stream or download to your device — then watch any time, anywhere.

MOTV
MYOUTDOORTV®
ADVENTURE. TO GO.™

START YOUR
FREE TRIAL
NOW

MONTHLY
\$9.99

ANNUALLY
\$99.99



KEEP THE SEASON ALIVE

**9 DAYS OF THE LARGEST
OUTDOOR SPORT SHOW
IN THE WORLD**

**OVER 1,100 EXHIBITORS
WITH OVER 400 OUTFITTERS**
• GUNS • ARCHERY • GEAR
• FISHING • BOATS • RVs • ATVs

**OVER 200 LIVE DEMOS
& SEMINARS FROM
TOP HUNTING &
FISHING PROS**



Presented By:

MOTV
MYOUTDOORTV

Cabela's



FEB. 3-11 PA FARM SHOW COMPLEX
HARRISBURG

GREATAMERICANOUTDOORSHOW.ORG



Chatham-Kent, Ontario ★

DOWNHILL FROM HERE?

Few racks can rival the width of this one from southern Ontario. His inside spread is 30 2/8 inches — and his outside is 33 0/8! Photo courtesy of Jordy Hope

In hunting, experience isn't everything. Just ask Ontario's Jordy Hope — whose first buck left him with few whitetail worlds to conquer.

BY DAN COLE Southern Ontario resident Jordy Hope carried no preconceived ideas into the 2016 deer season. Despite rumors of a big buck within his hunting area, the second-year whitetail hunter simply was hoping to get a legal deer. He had no way of knowing he was about to shoot a buck big enough to send a shock wave throughout the province's hunting community and ignite a social media frenzy.

As a 22-year-old electrical apprentice

living in Blenheim, Jordy had started small-game hunting at age 18. But after a couple years of listening to his friends tell stories about deer hunting and hearing about all the fun they had doing so, he decided to give that a try, too.

The '15 season was Jordy's first for deer. After experiencing the adrenaline rush of shooting his first deer, a young doe, he was eager to go again in '16.

"Nobody in my family was a hunter," Jordy notes. "It had been several decades since my grandpa had gone deer hunting, and I don't remember my dad ever going. But I asked them both if they would hunt with me (in '16). They both agreed to go. That alone made the season special for me.

"Then my friend Chad said he'd come

along, as well," the young hunter adds. "We hoped to get a deer or two — but even if we didn't, it was going to be fun anyway."

Following much anticipation and preparation on the part of all four hunters, Ontario's firearms season was upon them. Jordy's grandpa had secured permission for the group to hunt a small tract of private land within the municipality of Chatham-Kent. The tract featured a 30-acre woodlot in the middle of open farmland. This area is intensively farmed with scattered woodlots dotting the landscape: not the greatest habitat for protecting bucks long enough for them to reach prime age. But the party wasn't looking for mature bucks; their hope was any legal whitetail, no matter the size or age.

For a deer hunter, few things that can match the excitement of opening morning. After months of waiting, anticipation finally is replaced with nearly uncontrolled excitement. Thus the sleepless eve of opening morning.

"I really wanted the others to be successful, especially Dad and Grandpa," Jordy recalls. "It had been so long since they had hunted. It would have been really nice if one or both could take a deer."

Opening morning finally came, and it didn't disappoint. Jordy's 82-year-old grandpa got things rolling by taking a nice 10-pointer. This added even more excitement to the group and made them more determined to hunt hard.

On Wednesday morning, Oct. 12, Jordy decided to take a lawn chair and sit where that buck had been killed three days earlier. Using a 20-gauge shotgun his Grandpa had loaned him, Jordy set out to post on the edge of the woodlot.

About 10:00 a.m., a flock of turkeys made their way down a trail Jordy was watching. That was the only excitement Jordy had experienced to that point of the day, and the lack of other action was beginning to wear on him. He stood up



Jordy was so stunned at the sight of this beast that he literally dropped his shotgun! But the super-wide buck still stood there long enough for the startled hunter to get off two shots. Photo courtesy of Jordy Hope

and standing broadside to the hunter, offering a perfect shot. But because of the unexpected nature of the sighting, Jordy came unglued.

"I jumped up and out of the lawn chair," he recalls. "I was so excited I actually dropped my shotgun on the ground! The buck just stood there, and I was able to get the gun up and fire two shots. The deer ran off. But I did see him flinch at one of the shots, so I was fairly certain I had hit him."

Jordy sat back down in the lawn chair and tried to compose himself. He sent a text message to Chad, telling him what had just happened. Jordy had no way of knowing that at that very moment, Chad was watching a deer himself. However, within a few

seconds of sending the text message, Jordy heard Chad shoot. Amazingly, the two friends had shot deer within seconds of each other!

Of course, Jordy didn't have his deer yet. After following the blood trail for a distance, he came across the buck bedded but still very much alive. Two more shots followed, and the buck went down for good.

It was a special day for two good friends, and congratulatory high-fives were given and the respective stories shared. It wasn't long before both deer were loaded into a pickup and brought to the barn and hung for cooling.

It was at this point that most of the "field" photos were taken. And then, sometime that evening, Jordy posted a photo of his buck to a social media page. That's when the firestorm began.

"Nobody in camp knew just how big that deer actually was," Jordy recalls. "It was just a deer to us. We

had no idea what a trophy buck was. Other than knowing it was a big-bodied deer that dressed out 250 pounds, we honestly had no idea what we were looking at."

Social media would soon change that.

"Once I posted that picture, the comments started rolling in about how big

JORDY HOPE BUCK

| | |
|---------------------------------------|---------------|
| Scorable points 13 (7R, 6L) | Total length |
| Tip-to-tip spread 22 7/8 | of abnormal |
| Greatest spread 33 0/8 | points: 3 2/8 |
| Inside spread 30 2/8 | |

| Areas Measured | Right | Left | Difference |
|-----------------|---------------|---------------|--------------|
| Main Beam | 29 0/8 | 29 4/8 | 4/8 |
| 1st point (G-1) | 5 6/8 | 6 2/8 | 3/8 |
| 2nd point (G-2) | 9 7/8 | 6 7/8 | 3 0/8 |
| 3rd point (G-3) | 10 1/8 | 9 7/8 | 2/8 |
| 4th point (G-4) | 8 1/8 | 9 0/8 | 7/8 |
| 5th point (G-5) | 1 4/8 | 2 3/8 | 7/8 |
| 1st circ. (H-1) | 5 3/8 | 4 6/8 | 5/8 |
| 2nd circ. (H-2) | 4 3/8 | 4 2/8 | 1/8 |
| 3rd circ. (H-3) | 4 2/8 | 4 1/8 | 1/8 |
| 4th circ. (H-4) | 4 1/8 | 4 0/8 | 1/8 |
| Totals | 82 4/8 | 81 0/8 | 6 7/8 |

Gross typical score 193 0/8

Subtract side-to-side differences - 6 7/8

Subtract abnormal points - 3 2/8

FINAL NET TYPICAL SCORE 182 7/8

The main beams and inside spread of this southern Ontario monster total an incredible 88 6/8 inches.

to stretch his legs for a few seconds.

Once Jordy had reseated himself, he looked to his left. Nothing there. Then he looked to his right. Again, there was nothing. So he glanced back to the left once more.

There stood a deer! And it was a buck!

The whitetail was only 30 yards away

he really was," Jordy says. "I still didn't believe it; I thought the first few comments were made as a joke! But the comments just kept coming, and everyone was saying how big the deer was, that he was huge, that deer don't get that big, that he was a monster. I was getting real curious by then and thought maybe I had shot something special."

Still, it wasn't until a couple days later, when Jordy took the antlers and cape to taxidermist Josh Thibodeau with Tru-Life Taxidermy in Tilbury, Ontario, that reality began to set in.

"Josh told me this buck was like nothing he'd even mounted before. He said it was wider than any deer he had even seen. He insisted I get it measured for the Ontario record book. He convinced me that I had something pretty special," Jordy says.

Many aspects of a whitetail rack can be considered "world class." But nothing else might be as obvious as wide spread. It's usually the first thing we notice, and when it comes to "wow" factor, it's at the forefront. Of course, that 30 2/8-inch spread isn't all this giant has to offer.

He's also world class in sheer size.

The score sheet numbers are impressive, to say the least. Each of the beams is at least 29 inches, pushing the gross typical score to 193 0/8 inches. That total gives a true indication of the actual size of the antlers. The inside spread credit on a rack measured with the Boone & Crockett scoring system can't exceed the length of the longer main beam, so this one gets an inside spread credit of "only" 29 4/8. But even that number puts him among the widest B&C whitetails in history!

What does Jordy think, now that he realizes he's taken a world-class buck? "It's still unbelievable to me!" he says. "Deer hunting is the best thing I've ever tried. I'm so glad that my dad and grandpa and one of my best friends, Chad, were all there. It was an unbelievable experience, and I'm very thankful they were all there to share it with me!"

Ontario has long been overlooked by serious trophy hunters, but that could be changing. In recent years, both the eastern and the northwestern parts of

the province have produced their share of record-book bucks. And within the past 10 years, the Ontario Federation of Wildlife has recorded a handful of typicals that have pushed the tape over 190 inches, including a couple that have grossed well over 200 typical.

The province's best non-typical also can hold their own. New archery and muzzleloader records have been recorded recently, with both marks around 240 inches of antler. Those are monsters for anywhere.

As a result of such kills, the overall trophy quality available in Ontario is slowly gaining notoriety. Hunting events and magazine articles also are bringing a better awareness of habitat and herd management. More locals are enjoying better hunting and experiencing the excitement of a big-buck encounter.

If you were to ask Jordy Hope what kind of trophy whitetail potential his home province has, he just might spread his arms nearly three feet apart and tell you, "They can get *this* big!" And that's as big as they get anywhere else in the world. **NAW**



You have a lot of options on the market today when it comes to food plot products. And while some companies have to pay celebrity hunters to endorse their products, fortunately we don't have to. We let our customers do the talking and we think what real hunters actually put in the back of their pickups is much more impressive.

In fact, Whitetail Institute customers have broken multiple state records, and even the world record using our products. Now, not all our customers break records but they are seeing more deer and consistently harvesting the largest bucks in their area. You can chalk these results up to our research. Our product line has been scientifically developed to help you attract, hold, and grow the biggest deer possible. **RESEARCH = RESULTS.**

Join the tens of thousands of hunters that are enjoying their best hunting ever. And free samples of WhitetailInstitute seeds and a DVD are a great way to get started, all you pay is shipping and handling. Visit www.whitetailinstitute.com or call 800-688-3030 weekdays from 8:00am to 5:00pm CT and speak to a Whitetail Institute Food Plot Consultant.



Repeating History

BY STEVE BARTYLLA

I was getting frustrated. I've always been an equal-opportunity hunter, meaning I never put all my chips on one buck, but I've always been open to cashing in on a happy surprise.

This was different. I'd dedicated my entire season to taking one buck. There was no guarantee I'd kill him, but I'd drawn a line in the sand and refused to shoot any other buck for so long as I believed this one was alive. Outside of him once having busted me moments after I'd climbed into the stand, I hadn't come remotely close to making it happen.

With the breeding phase winding down, shotgun season upon me and having no new ideas to try, I did all I could think of to do: I relied on history. I headed for an afternoon sit on a food source that had always heated up around that time of year. And I got my shot. Truth be told, tagging that buck was most likely the one and only time I've pinned all my hopes on one buck, but that doesn't change how history put me in that stand.

For those of us lucky enough to hunt some of the same properties for multiple years straight, the time to sleep through history class should be long gone. Every moment we spend on a piece of dirt, we're taking a real-world history course. If we pay attention, it can help us tag a stud buck. After all, history is well known for repeating itself.

WHAT SIGN SHOWS

One of the ways this can be clearly seen is in analyzing buck sign. Ever notice that each fall there's a cluster of fresh rubs in that quarter-acre patch of grass and weeds 50-100 some yards into the timber off that larger, more open food source? It's likely because that's an established staging area, used by bucks for generations.

That makes complete sense. Mature bucks all have their own personalities, but they still want the same things: quality food, water, protective cover, comfort, a feeling of safety and breeding opportunities. For as complicated as we try to make mature bucks out to be, everything they do revolves around filling those needs.

Complicating matters just slightly is that we must also factor the dominance hierarchy and social stress into our simple equation. Although I'm convinced the desire to achieve dominance varies

THE MORE YOU KNOW ABOUT HOW PAST BUCKS HAVE USED AN AREA, THE BETTER YOU CAN PINPOINT RED-HOT SETUPS FOR THE FUTURE. SCOUT NOW TO FIND THEM.

with each buck's personality type, the motivation behind achieving dominance is likely the same in all bucks. In the deer world, when you're "the man" you can pretty much do whatever you want without fear of getting your tail kicked.


That applies to which area a buck claims as his daylight core area, bedding site, food sources and so on. The dominant buck claims what he wants. He's rarely challenged by the subordinate bucks sharing portions of his home range.

Now, more than a few subordinates want what the most dominant buck in the area has. And some of them will have it, as soon as their turn comes. However, until then, Mr. Big very often owns the best of the best.

With that in mind, it shouldn't be surprising that the dominant bucks change, but nearly all dominant bucks on a property share the same tendencies year after year, so long as drastic changes don't occur. You can see that very clearly in daytime core areas and bedding spots.

Let's look at the buck mentioned above. He was 5 1/2 years old and showed all the signs of dominance. While he likely had several daylight core area bedding locations, I was confident I knew where his primary one was. In fact, that was where he'd busted me on the earlier hunt.

The setting was a couple-acre patch of overgrown meadow on a flat 200 yards into the timber. Where this micro-habitat ended, a half-dozen wooded fingers and points shot out from the overgrown meadow overlooking the ridge side, creek bottom and farm fields below. The buck could skip between



Cover and topographic features favored by one big buck often prove attractive to others. If you closely study the land and how deer use it, you can find spots worth hunting even after the original buck is long gone. *Photo by Rick Small*



those points and knobs, offering nearly every exposure he could want, as well as being able to adjust for wind directions. With the overgrown meadow established as a family group bedding area, he had the points and fingers to himself, while being able to keep tabs on the does below.

From a big buck's point of view, it doesn't get better than that. With a sea of deer covering his backside, it would be a supreme challenge for a predator to slip in undetected, even with a stiff wind to cover movement and sound. Yet almost all of the points and fingers offered the buck a killer view of the setting below, eliminating slipping up from the

bottom. If you tried to do that, he'd literally watch you approach, and he'd slip out unseen. He had food above and below, along with water and the old meadow and scattered oaks offering a daytime food source. What more could any buck want?

Trail camera photos validated my educated guess, with him often seemingly coming from that area in the evening and returning in the morning. But even before ever getting photos of him there and despite him having a different daylight core area the year before, I was confident he bedded there.

Why? Because the area's previous Mr. Big had been shot during late season the year before. With

the buck I was after now being dominant, and with that prime bedding area now empty, I was sure he'd fill the void. The spot was just that good.

Sure, the fact heavily used scrapes and clusters of rubs have a high tendency to show up in the same place year after year is generally more obvious, it happens at least as often with preferred daylight core and bedding spots. In fact, they're generally even a safer bet than the safe bet the rub clusters and serious scraping locations will be repeated. Food sources will change: a farmer's crop fails, previously attractive clearcut regrowth matures, oaks experience a poor mast year and so on.

Buck bedding choices are most often based on topography and/or cover types. Unless an earthquake or severe windstorm hits or the landowner goes nuts with a bulldozer, those spots aren't changing. Major flooding is about the only thing that's going to submerge that island in the swamp and cause the buck normally using it to bed elsewhere.

AGING ESTIMATES

I shake my head at those who look at an unknown buck, be it in still photos, on video or on the hoof, and definitively state he's 4 1/2, 5 1/2, 6 1/2 or 7 1/2 years old.

I've managed 3-5 properties for various clients each year for a very long time now, and one of my responsibilities is aging live bucks to help my clients reach their goals. In doing so, I review well over a half-million images each year.

We all should be pretty good at aging yearling bucks. I'd say I hit close to 100 percent accuracy on them. I'll also claim at least 90 percent accuracy on 2 1/2s and a solid 70 percent on those I peg as 3 1/2s. But it falls off quickly for me from there forward. In fact, once a buck I don't have history with gets to 4 1/2 or beyond, I don't have any confidence in saying anything more than he's "4 1/2-plus."

As do humans, bucks have the tendency to display certain traits as they age. There aren't many guys in their teens going bald, just as there aren't many 3 1/2-year-old bucks whose necks seamlessly merge with their briskets to the point we can't see where one ends and the other begins. That said, nowhere close to every 80-year-old man is bald or has bad posture. Some guys gray early. Others gray late. The same applies to bucks' blocky faces, deep chests, filled-out hindquarters and so on. Such traits are heavily influenced by but not totally controlled by age. Thus, there most often are slight variations between similarly aged bucks.

Maybe some deer managers really are so good that they can see the difference between 6 1/2 and 7 1/2, but I can't. Sure, I like my odds at saying a 7 1/2 looks older than a 4 1/2, but pegging him as a 7 1/2 would be a lucky guess on my part, nothing more. That is, unless I have history with that buck going back to 3 1/2 or younger. Assuming I can match his body or antler characteristics year to year, even I can add a year to his original age with each passing year he survives.

Admittedly, being able to peg a buck's age that precisely isn't important to most readers. It isn't for me, either, when on public land or private land enrolled in a program that allows public hunting. In such places, if I see a buck I feel is at least 3 1/2, I'm very likely flinging an arrow at my first ethical opportunity. I'd always suggest you shoot the first legal buck that trips your trigger, too. After all, deer hunting is ultimately supposed to be fun.

Sure, big deer often don't bed in the same locations every day, and subordinate buck bedding is a bit more of a crap shoot. But you can bet there's a very good reason the dominant buck pretty regularly uses the same bedding area or only a smattering of them. It's also a safe bet another mature buck will fill that niche once Mr. Big has been knocked off his lofty perch.

So when you locate a mature buck's core area, log it in your history book. So long as very drastic habitat changes don't occur, odds are good that 50 years from now another Mr. Big is still going to be burning daylight there. I'm confident I know of over 50 locations mature bucks will be bedding in next fall, despite my not having stepped onto some of those grounds for many years. Knowing that history can be invaluable.

It can also be invaluable in finding new bedding locations. Whether it's that cluster of rubs, those hammered scrapes or those daylight core bedding areas, study them. Ask yourself why,

out of all the locations the buck(s) could be using, was that one spot chosen?

Assuming you're doing this during the off-season, squat in those large, single depressions and look around. What does this bedding spot have going for it, as far as seeing, hearing and/or smelling danger approaching? What does it have for escape routes? If it's Mr. Big's daylight home, you can bet there are solid reasons behind his having picked that spot. Find those answers and you can start seeing similar locations. You won't always be right, but it sure beats blind guessing as to where big bucks bed.

PREDICTABLE PATTERNS

With all this in mind, it shouldn't be a surprise that we see buck patterns generally repeat over time. No, I'm not saying the next dominant buck will do everything exactly as the previous one did. Frankly, hunters claiming the ability to "pattern" bucks to that level are likely blowing smoke.

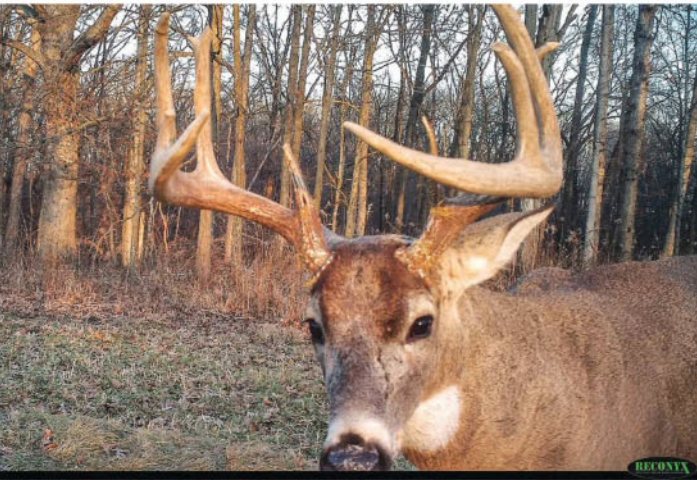
I long ago concluded "patterning" a buck is merely knowing one or more things he tends to do in daylight in open season. That doesn't mean he'll do the exact same thing every day. We've merely picked up on one or more of his potentially exploitable tendencies.

Using this more realistic definition, we've already established that buck patterns repeat year to year, as dominant bucks tend to scrape, rub and bed in the same locations annually. Doesn't it make sense that they'll likely follow at least some of their predecessors' travel patterns, as well? After all, assuming no drastic changes, if an earlier dominant buck thought a specific route between Point A and B was the best route to take, chances aren't bad that bucks coming along after him will take the same path between those same locations. Again, those types of observations should go straight into the history books.

Another thing to keep in mind is the rut cycle and how dynamically the habitat changes over the course of the season. The rut cycle changes bucks' primary interests. At the same time, changing habitat alters preferred food



The author is confident this buck is 5 1/2. But only because he had what appears to be the same deer on camera in each of the previous two autumns. Photo courtesy of Steve Bartylla



If the buck you documented in a certain spot last year survived the season and there are no major habitat changes before next fall, expect him to repeat that basic pattern. *Photo courtesy of Steve Bartylla*

sources and even can shift some bedding spots that were based on proximity to food/cover. Even without crop rotations, a lot changes when habitat goes from green to being void of actively growing plants.

Because of this, we can often use history to predict shifts in how bucks will use the habitat. With the same general

changes occurring each fall, we can often predict which areas will be hot during each phase of seasons to come. In fact, knowing when and how deer shift food sources is what led me to the blind in which I shot that late-season buck described above. Once breeding began to wind down, the shelter from cold winds offered by that bottom plot made it a likely feeding spot.

In addition, I'd made sure that plot would always offer late-season food better than any other on the property. With the breeding phase tailing off and mature bucks having just been run through the ringer, I knew they needed to recover as quickly as they could. Under such conditions, hunting over top-quality food in a spot sheltered from the

elements only makes sense.

Most of us have heard the stories. "Every year on such and such date, I see either the same mature buck or a different one from that stand." Although this is typically announced with mysticism, there's nothing overly mysterious to it. The amount of daylight in a 24-hour cycle, the habitat state and the rut cycle are all going to be roughly the same on that day every year.

Again, there's no guarantee history will repeat itself each year on a given date, but it's far from fantastical that a given dominant buck or the next in line will do so. After all, they generally want the same thing, at that time of year, every year.

IN CONCLUSION

I'll be honest: I hated history classes in high school and college. That said, I find deer behavior history to be fascinating and helpful. I can't promise that any of you will find it as interesting as I do, but if you take your hunting history classes seriously, you could find it equally valuable. **NAW**

Big Garden? No Problem!

Now you can till while you ride—with the Amazing DR® Tow-Behind Tiller!



HUGE TILLER SALE!

Starting at just \$199⁹⁹

TOWS BEHIND your riding mower, ATV, or garden tractor.

PUTS NO STRAIN on you because your towing vehicle does all the work.

TILLS TWICE AS WIDE, deeper, and faster than any walk-behind tiller.



DRrototiller.com

1874CB © 2018

NEW and IMPROVED

DR® Field and Brush Mowers

Faster...Easier... Lower-Priced!

Mow fields, brush, even saplings with never-before ease.

20 HP, PRO MAX-34



1874CA © 2018

- NEW WIDE CUT MODELS** for faster mowing!
- NEW POWER STEERING** for easier handling!
- NEW LOW PRICES** reduced up to \$500!

ROUGH CUT & FINISH MOWERS—the most complete selection available.

DRfieldbrush.com



ATTENTION: TRACTOR AND ATV OWNERS! NEW MODELS starting at \$1399⁹⁹

FREE SHIPPING | **6 MONTH TRIAL** | **EASY FINANCING**

SOME LIMITATIONS APPLY. CALL OR GO ONLINE FOR DETAILS.

Call for a **FREE DVD and Catalog!**

Includes product specifications and factory-direct offers.

TOLL FREE **888-213-0398**





The Bluegrass giant Chris bagged during the 2016 muzzleloader season features extraordinary beam and tine length. Photo by Bill Cooper

ONE MORE RIDGE

CHRIS SKAGGS COULD HAVE THROWN IN THE TOWEL. THE WEATHER WAS NASTY, AND THE HUGE KENTUCKY BUCK HE'D BEEN AFTER WAS AWOL. BUT CHECKING THAT LAST SPOT MADE ALL THE DIFFERENCE.

BY BILL COOPER



BY BILL COOPER

Gently rolling fields of bluegrass divided by ornamental stone and board fences make the thoroughbred horse country around Lexington, Kentucky one of the most recognizable farming landscapes in the world. But while the state's link with horse racing is well known, many people are unaware Kentucky is also the top cattle state east of the Mississippi River.

The effect of row crop agriculture as a supplemental food source for deer has been well documented in the state's western counties, but little has been said of the vast acreages of pasture and grasslands generated through cattle farming. While this alternate form of land use is seen throughout the state, it's particularly important in eastern and northern Kentucky, where more rugged hill-and-valley terrain can't support row crop farming. From a whitetail's perspective, the checkerboard pattern of hillside pastures interspersed with woodlots, brushy ravines and hardwood drainages offers an excellent combination of cover and food.

A great example of this habitat diversity occurs along the rugged rock wall escarpment of the Cumberland Plateau, where vast acreages of the bordering hilly uplands have been converted to pasture. In fact, in several counties pastureland and hay production account for 30-45 percent of total land use.

Chris Skaggs lives in this region and grew up deer hunting the local hills and hollows. He believes there has been a

gradual increase in deer numbers over the past several years. Early in summer 2016, he made an interesting discovery while bush-hogging a hillside on a large cattle farm in the area.

"I was just below an old bulldozed pile of brush and limbs at the top of the



Cold, wet and frustrated, Chris almost went home early on the morning of Dec. 10, 2016. But he decided to check one more ridge. Awaiting him there was a 200-yard shot at the deer of his dreams. *Photo courtesy of Chris Skaggs*

ridge when I spotted something unusual sticking up out of the grass," Chris remembers. "After getting off the tractor, I discovered it was a huge shed antler. I'd found other sheds before, but never anything matching the size of this.

"It immediately crossed my mind how great it would be to find the matching shed, and as I turned around to check the surrounding hillside, I practically stepped on the other antler," Chris recalls. "I was thinking the shed was from a big deer I had previously sighted near the same location. But that particular buck had a drop tine. And since neither shed showed any

evidence of a drop, it was obvious this was a different deer.”

Not long after finding the sheds, Chris was feeding cattle one afternoon when he jumped a buck out of a thicket. Chris was amazed to see huge blobs of velvet pointing high up above the deer’s head. Whether or not it was the same buck responsible for the sheds remains speculation, but it’s difficult to imagine two of such size in the same area.

Leading up to the November gun season, there were no further sightings of any large bucks in the vicinity. Despite having several trail cameras around the area, Chris had no photos of bucks even approaching the size of the one that had dropped the sheds.

“Never sighting the buck wasn’t really all that surprising,” Chris says. “But I’ll have to admit being disappointed not getting one or two photos.”



could see more activity in the thicket. Through my scope, I first thought something was shaking the limbs of a tree. But then the branches turned into antlers, as the biggest buck I’ve ever seen stepped out behind the does.”

The does continued to move off, with the big buck following, in the opposite direction from the hunter’s location. At that extreme distance, Chris could only sit and stare in amazement.

“At that moment, the shed antlers really never even entered my mind,” he remembers. “The buck was bigger than anything I’d ever imagined seeing.”

For the remaining nine days of gun season, Chris hunted the area whenever he had a chance. During this time he saw numerous deer, including several bucks — but not the giant.

“Having seen the huge buck and knowing he was probably still somewhere on the farm, there was no way I would have considered filling my tag with another deer,” Chris says. “I knew the late muzzleloader season in early December would give me another opportunity to possibly encounter the buck.”

“There was approximately three weeks before that season opened, and I was hoping that sometime during that period the buck might trigger one of my trail cameras, giving me some idea of his location. Unfortunately, that didn’t happen.”

The weather for opening day of muzzleloader season was clear and cold, with a dawn temperature in the mid-teens. But there was little deer movement.

“I spotted a few does, but nothing else,” Chris notes. “I did change locations a couple times to check out some other nearby hillsides and bottoms but never sighted a single buck.”

The second morning was basically a repeat of the previous day, with only a few scattered does appearing. To make matters worse it began raining around midday. The rain continued into the night.

When Chris awoke early the next morning, rain was still falling and the temperature hovered just above freezing. Nevertheless, he’d arranged to be off that day and realized his hunting opportunities were dwindling. The long ride on the 4-wheeler that morning was anything but pleasant.

“At daybreak, there wasn’t a single deer in sight,” Chris says. “After sitting there for some time, I decided to walk to another ridgetop that provided

Chris found these matched sheds within a few feet apart in spring 2016. The buck proved far more elusive, even with several trail cameras scattered around the area.
Photo by Bill Cooper

Chris had easy access to another ridgetop where he could check for deer activity on an additional series of hillsides and bottomlands. From trail camera data and personal observation, he knew it was necessary to be in position by daybreak. This meant a 2 1/2-mile ATV run, followed by a 500-yard walk.

“There was a good bit of deer movement on opening morn-

ing,” Chris says. “In fact, I actually spotted more bucks than does. At one point I saw a doe emerge from a small isolated woodlot, followed by another doe and then a third.

“Even being over 500 yards away, I

CHRIS SKAGGS BUCK

Scorable points 12 (5R, 7L) | Total length of abnormal points: 6 7/8
 Tip-to-tip spread 1 3/8
 Greatest spread 22 2/8
 Inside spread 19 5/8

| Areas Measured | Right | Left | Difference |
|-----------------|---------------|---------------|--------------|
| Main Beam | 30 1/8 | 29 5/8 | 4/8 |
| 1st point (G-1) | 5 4/8 | 6 3/8 | 7/8 |
| 2nd point (G-2) | 16 0/8 | 16 2/8 | 2/8 |
| 3rd point (G-3) | 12 2/8 | 12 6/8 | 4/8 |
| 4th point (G-4) | 3 2/8 | 2 0/8 | 1 2/8 |
| 1st circ. (H-1) | 5 3/8 | 5 6/8 | 3/8 |
| 2nd circ. (H-2) | 4 4/8 | 4 4/8 | — |
| 3rd circ. (H-3) | 4 5/8 | 4 4/8 | 1/8 |
| 4th circ. (H-4) | 4 1/8 | 3 6/8 | 3/8 |
| Totals | 85 6/8 | 85 4/8 | 4 2/8 |

Gross typical score 190 7/8
 Subtract side-to-side differences - 4 2/8
 Subtract abnormal points - 6 7/8
FINAL NET TYPICAL SCORE 179 6/8

Chris made a 200-yard shot with his muzzleloader to down this great buck in Bath County, Kentucky.

The hunter’s stand site on opening morning of gun season was a hilltop ridge overlooking a long, winding creek bottom. Pasture covered much of the hillsides and bottomland bordering the wooded drainage. From this location,

a view of a long, wide bottom. Normally, there's almost always a few deer to be seen there, but on that morning there was nothing.

"With the rain continuing to fall, I had just about decided to go back and take some time to dry off and warm up," the hunter says. "But at the last minute, I remembered there was one other nearby ridge I hadn't yet checked. I knew the bottom below the ridgetop bordered a small stand of timber deer frequented.

"After climbing to the top and glancing down the hillside, the sight below literally took my breath," Chris recalls. "Walking through a field of waist-high briars and weeds near the bottom of the hill was the giant buck. No other deer were in sight."

The excited hunter began maneuvering into shooting position. But that proved difficult, due to the steep slope.

"I was shaking too bad to attempt any shot without a solid rest," Chris explains. "But when I got down on the ground, I was unable to see the buck. I finally managed to crawl forward several yards and use my backpack as a gun rest."

The buck was 200 yards away: a distance Chris was completely comfortable with. He was using a .50 caliber break-action CVA Scout muzzleloader equipped with a Konus 3x9 scope and 250-grain Powerbelt bullets, and he'd practiced a lot with the rig at this distance. He knew the gun was extremely accurate.

"I don't know if it was due to the rain or something else, but the deer continued to shake its head back and forth as it slowly walked through the field," Chris says. "When I fired, it jumped straight up, kicked backward with both hind legs and then just stood there. I was wait-

THE TURNING POINT |

TOUGH IT OUT

For Chris Skaggs, persistence was the most obvious key to taking a world-class whitetail.

Many other hunters would have called it quits early that nasty morning, or perhaps never even would have left home at all. Chris not only went out, he kept looking hard even when the day starting out slowly. His reward was the buck of many lifetimes.

ing for the deer to drop when suddenly it turned and began trotting off.

"I was in total disbelief that I could possibly have missed, and I felt physically sick," Chris says. "I began to reload, but by the time I finished, the deer was standing 300 yards away: a distance I'd never shot. But just as I cocked the gun, the buck stepped sideways and fell

over, kicking. There may have been happier moments in my life, but at the time I couldn't think of one!"

Chris wasted no time getting down to the buck. A month earlier he'd been amazed by the rack at 500 yards; now, up close, it seemed unbelievable. Normally the hunter had no trouble loading a deer onto his ATV, but this buck was just too big. Finally, by strapping the head and rack to the railing well up above the ground, Chris was able to pull him out with the vehicle.

There was never a question this great whitetail would make the 170 net inches required to qualify for Boone & Crockett's all-time record book. As the score sheet shows, the dimensions and balance are exceptional. The gross typical score is 190 7/8 inches. Minor asymmetry deductions, plus 7 inches of abnormal points, drop the final net score to 179 6/8.

A comparison of the sheds to the rack revealed some remarkable similarities. Except for an increase in overall size, the only major difference was the addition of well-matched G-4 tines. Particularly interesting are the sheds' 26-inch main beams and G-2s that exceed 14 inches. Using a similar inside spread estimate, the buck would have grossed in the 160s as an 8-pointer that year. What had already been a great buck in '15 had become even greater a year later. **NAW**

ON THE TRAIL

**GHOST HOLLER
WHITETAILS, LLC**
**Kentucky Deer &
Turkey Hunts**

VELVET ARCHERY - GUN - MUZZLELOADER
FLEXTONE 2017 WORLD TURKEY
HUNTING CHAMPION



FRANCIS WHITFILL
Owner/Operator
270-978-9972
Visit us on Facebook

WYOMING WHITETAILS

TrophyRidgeOutfitters.com
Whitetail, Mule Deer,
Antelope, Merriam Turkey
Call Ralph at
(307) 756-9776, Lic#BG-353

Best priced Deer Hunts!



180" - 205" class
10, 12 and 14 point
bucks for \$5,900
while they last!!

Call (330) 763-3301 or email us at wcbwbook@gmail.com
1st hunters get 1st pick. Big typical and non-typical Bucks!

www.bestdeerhuntohio.com
\$1,000 Deposit - Guaranteed Hunt!

**WORK FROM HOME
\$500 WEEKLY**

Assemble Products From Home
Free Information Available
Call 860-357-1599

**KENTUCKY TENNESSEE
TROPHY BUCKS**

FAIR CHASE HUNTS
THOUSANDS OF ACRES
THREE DAY HUNT
\$1000
CALL OR TEXT FOR
FREE BROCHURE
270-348-4281

WHITETAIL HAVEN OF OHIO
One of Ohio's Premier Hunting Preserves

All food and lodging included
5-star food and lodging
For details call Roy - 330-231-0983
www.whitetailhavenofohio.com



With alfalfa fields lining many rivers, prime whitetail feeding areas are easy to locate in eastern Montana. Photo by Jerry Voss/iStock

BIG SKY ADVENTURE

The eastern half of Montana is characterized by dry plains, rolling hills and cattle ranches measured in square miles, rather than acres. The region features some of the widest weather extremes of anywhere in the U.S., with 100 degrees common in summer and well-below-zero lows during winter. Oh, and wind: ever-present wind. The joke is that if it ever stopped suddenly, all the cows would tip over.

BY BERNIE BARRINGER

Western Montana is mountainous

and in many areas heavily forested, with a lot of waterways. But eastern Montana is dry country. Thus, if you find the water, you'll also find whitetails. This barren land is intersected by several rivers large and small, and it's along those drainages that you'll find the highest concentrations of game.

The Missouri and Yellowstone are the largest and most well-known rivers in the eastern half of Montana. At least, they're the most well-known outside the whitetail-hunting world. It's very

possible that the Milk River, a tributary of the Missouri, is the most famous among whitetail enthusiasts. You can thank outdoor television for that.

In addition to the Milk River, eastern Montana has several other tributaries to the Missouri and Yellowstone that don't get the publicity, but still have the goods. The Powder, Musselshell, Tongue and Bighorn are good examples. And each of these has tributaries of its own. Again, if there's year-round water, there will be whitetails.

Interestingly, the key to making this



For more information on Realtree Xtra Green and the latest camouflage technology, visit Realtree.com

> REALTREE.COM/HUNTALLSEASON | [#REALTREEEXTRAGREEN](https://twitter.com/REALTREEEXTRAGREEN)



all work to your advantage as a hunter is the cows. They must eat, and alfalfa is mostly what they eat. Water from these streams is pumped onto the flat lands bordering these waterways. The result is millions of irrigated acres of lush, green hay fields. And whitetails are secondary beneficiaries.

The sheer numbers of deer is mind boggling. You'll hear stories of sitting on a hill overlooking a river bottom and counting upwards of 200 deer in simultaneous view from that vantage point. It's a whitetail hunter's dream.

Unfortunately, it's also fertile ground for disease to get some traction and ravage the entire herd. And that's exactly what happened in northeastern Montana around 2010. Epizootic hemorrhagic disease (EHD) took a huge toll on the Milk River herd, and populations dropped to a fraction of what they were in their peak of the 1990s and 2000s. While southeast Montana wasn't hit nearly as hard, it also had spotty die-offs.

But the deer are slowly coming back, and the hunting opportunities now are excellent. According to Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks statistics, the whitetail population in Region 6 (northeast Montana) is up about 20 percent over the 10-year average from 2006-'15. Region 7 (southeast Montana) has done even better, with the population showing estimated to be 25 percent larger than average. You might not see the incredible numbers of deer the area was known for a decade or two ago, but you'll still see plenty. It's a good time to hunt Big Sky Country.

In addition to holding a lot of whitetails, there are other appealing characteristics to this region. First and foremost is the ease of accessing property to hunt. A lot of outfitters have the best land leased up, but there are plenty of places to wedge yourself in and have a great place to hunt. Whitetails are eating a lot of the farmers' profits, and these landowners are normally quite receptive to the deer hunter who works to find a place to hunt.

Another draw is the early archery opening. Whitetail season opens the



The author tagged this early-season buck while bowhunting along the Little Powder River. Photo courtesy of Bernie Barringer

first Saturday in September, when many bucks are still in velvet. The opportunity to kill a buck in full velvet appeals to many hunters.

The hunts consist of figuring out where the bucks are bedding, which is much easier here than anywhere else I've hunted. Once you figure that out, just pick a spot to intercept bucks feeding in the green fields in the evenings.

Piece of cake, right? Well, not so fast. First of all, these bucks are often bedding in river bottom cover or brushy hill-sides, and they often make long walks crossing open areas to get to the food. This can make it difficult to for a hunter to get into position without being seen.

Another struggle is finding a tree anywhere close to the trails the deer are using. There just aren't that many trees to choose from in most areas. Then add in the fact most of the trees are giant cottonwoods that were saplings when Lewis and Clark explored the area over 200 years ago. Many have the diameter of a Volkswagen Beetle. Just try to get a trail camera strap around that. You'll want to bring ladder stands and extra-long ratchet straps to get elevated. Pop-

up-style ground blinds also are golden in this region.

Montana produces few Boone & Crockett quality bucks compared to the farm country of the Midwest, but the sheer numbers of bucks scoring 130-150 inches will keep you coming back. If you like clean 8- and 10-pointers, this part of the whitetail world is well known for them.

Nonresident deer permits are easy to obtain but quite spendy. Licenses and tags can be purchased over the counter in some areas but take applying in others. They'll set you back nearly \$500 for a deer tag. In most draw areas you'll draw every other year and often every year. To be guaranteed a tag, you can buy the elk-deer-bear-fishing combo license, which will torch your wallet for nearly a grand. The deadline for early applications has historically been March 15. Refer to the agency's website for details: fwp.mt.gov.

All in all, Eastern Montana offers a unique hunting experience every whitetail enthusiast should try at least once. Even for the diehard DIY hunter, it's not a bad idea to shorten your learning curve by hunting with an outfitter at least once before setting off on your own. Doing so will take some time off your learning curve. **NAW**

NAW HALL of FAME

1

Curtis Judy was just 12 years old when he claimed his first bow kill on Sept. 4, 2017, in LaGrange, Kentucky. The hunter worked hard to scout this nice velvet buck.

2

Chris Clovis harvested this West Virginia 10-pointer with a .300 Win. Mag. on Dec. 27, 2017. The buck was chasing a doe when he appeared.

3

Terry Galloway scored on this 270-pound monster in Gallatin Co., Illinois. Terry arrowed the buck at 28 yards with his Mathews bow.

4

After a 3-year quest, Terry Card of Warren, Pennsylvania, finally downed this giant 11-pointer on Oct. 3, 2017. Terry shot the buck at 14 yards, using a Mission G3 bow.

5

Callen Schmidt took this bruiser buck in Ripley Co., Indiana, on Nov. 26, 2017. The 10-year-old was hunting with his trusty AR-10 chambered in 7mm-08 Rem.



HAVE YOU SHOT A TROPHY BUCK? ▶ Please submit a clear photo and full details of the hunt to: Whitetail Hall Of Fame, 3330 Chastain Meadows Parkway NW, Suite 200, Kennesaw, GA 30144 or email submission to: whitetail@outdoorsg.com. Photos cannot be returned.

them, so obviously prescribed fire can be a useful control agent. It's been estimated that in Texas alone in excess of 20 million acres have been overtaken by juniper species.

Chaining, dozing, grubbing and root plowing have been used to reduce juniper abundance, followed by prescribe fire after natural fuels build



Brought to Texas years ago for livestock grazing, aggressive King Ranch bluestem has crowded out many native plants beneficial to whitetails and other species. Control is an ongoing challenge. *Photo by Gordon Whittington*

up sufficiently. Foliar spraying with Tordon 22K (1 percent picloram) or soil treatment with Velpar L (hexazonone) around the base of trees has been used. As I discourage use of any soil-active herbicide, I consider Tordon 22K the better of these options.

I've had great success in controlling juniper by mulching stands, then using prescribed burning. This is the lowest-cost method you can use.

King Ranch Bluestem

The last invasive species I'll discuss is one brought to the U.S. as a new cattle forage. It eventually spread throughout Texas and probably has reached Oklahoma. I can think of no other invasive more detrimental

to wildlife habitat than "KR." Once established, it's very difficult to even control, much less eradicate. The only success I've had is a combination of mechanical treatments involving the following steps.

First, mow the plants close to the ground prior to seed head establishment, to prevent reseeding. Then follow with repeated disking to expose the roots of the plants to desiccation (drying). I then repeat these steps for three years. Doing so appears to at least give a foothold to native grasses and other plants. You probably will have to come back periodically and repeat this procedure, however.

I haven't found chemical treatment to be very useful in controlling King Ranch bluestem, though there recently have been reports of a promising new herbicide (Pastora by DuPont). I can't yet comment on its efficacy.

Unfortunately, it appears "KR" is here to stay and that it will continue to spread into areas where the climate is conducive to its establishment.

BEST CONTROL OF ALL?

Unfortunately, there are no "magic bullets" for eradicating invasives. They're here to stay! However, with the methods described here, you should be able to develop an effective plan for controlling invasives on your property. Of course, the single best control measure is not to let them become established on your property to begin with.

The first step in dealing with unwanted plants is learning to recognize them. There are numerous printed field guides and online image banks, so study

them to familiarize yourself with what you're looking for. Then make periodic walks over your property to locate any unwanted species.

Over the last five years, invasive Chinese pistachio ("tallow" tree) has tried to gain a hold at our white-tail research facility in East Texas. However, it's enjoyed little success. That's because every spring we walk the property with a shovel and sprayer filled with Remedy:diesel, looking for new seedlings. We also use prescribed burning to deal with this plant. To this point, we've had success. However, should we ever stop early control, birds will carry more seeds in their droppings onto the property. It's a never-ending battle to prevent establishment of invasives.

In short, "the horse is out of the barn" when it comes to these pests. Any sound whitetail habitat management plan includes effective control of invasive plants and ongoing vigilance to make sure they don't become problems in the future. **NAW**

MAKING MEMORIES

BY JOEL M. HERRLING

Approaching the house, I can make out a person peering through the kitchen window. I steer the truck up the snow-covered driveway, trying to stay in the line of tracks already made. Even though this takes most of my focus, I can tell the unrecognizable figure in the window is trying to see if anything is in the back of my truck.

As I get closer to the house, I recognize the man. He has a long face and is almost bald. It's my father-in-law, Lou.

It's mid-morning on Thanksgiving, and I'm returning from hunting at the farm. It's an annual tradition for my brother Josh and me, along with some of our cousins.

Not one of us was successful this time, but we still made a few good memories. They're something I hope my two young sons also can share in making in a few years.

The smell of turkey overpowers the usual musty odors of the garage as I get out of the truck and start to gather up my rifle, camo clothing and stainless steel Thermos. Lou always comes over early to help my wife cook Thanksgiving dinner, and he does a tremendous job. He's in his 80s now; the weather is too cold for him to be out in the woods any more, due to a bad case of frostbite suffered many years ago, but he still enjoys enthusiastically talking whitetails with me.

Early on, I made the mistake of confessing to Lou how I'd messed up once by taking only four shotgun slugs with me. Being inexperienced, I hadn't known any better. On that hunt, I missed a doe with all four shots. Had I brought more, I think I finally could've hit her — because she kept getting closer and closer each time I shot.

"So, how much ammo did you bring with you today, sharpshooter?" Lou asks, not even allowing me to get past my excited young sons. "I can't believe she kept coming toward you. Probably felt safer right next to you."

After the ribbing, Lou asks how the season's going and what I've been seeing. From there, he moves into stories of deer hunts he went on in his more youthful days. The desire is still there with him.

“When Lou decided to downsize his house, he gave me several sets of antlers from bucks he'd taken Those antlers now are hanging in our garage, and the kids enjoy touching them while asking about them.”

As we sit and chat, my two boys come up and ask about hunting. I can see their passion developing and Lou's eyes lighting up. I can see he's glad they're taking an interest in it. Maybe this is my golden ticket: Have the boys ask if he'll take them deer hunting. What grandfather could say no to his grandsons? Every time I've asked him to go, he's declined.

When Lou decided to downsize his house, he gave me several sets of ant-

lers from bucks he'd taken, along with an old duck decoy. I have the bluebill on display, as it's quite a treasure. Those antlers now are hanging in our garage, and the kids enjoy touching them while asking about them.

I take the time to educate them on why deer have them and various stages of antler growth. Of course, they're far more interested in the smoothness and pointed tines contrasted with the bumps

around the bases than in what I have to say. I try my best to not let them poke them at each other — however, once I turn my attention to something else I have to yell, "Quit stabbing your little brother with them!"

I grew up a self-made hunter, learning quite a bit on my own. My own father was never interested in it, and my paternal grandfather passed away before I started hunting. My maternal grandfather was too busy farming and never wasted time chasing whitetails; he shot them only when they damaged his crops. So Lou is the only one left with whom I think the boys would enjoy sharing a deer hunt, besides their uncle.

Partaking in these events has adjusted my opinions on what would be a real trophy in my book: not necessarily a big buck of my own, but to be able to get Lou and the boys out on a deer hunt together. What a memory that would be for all involved.

Especially me. **NAW**



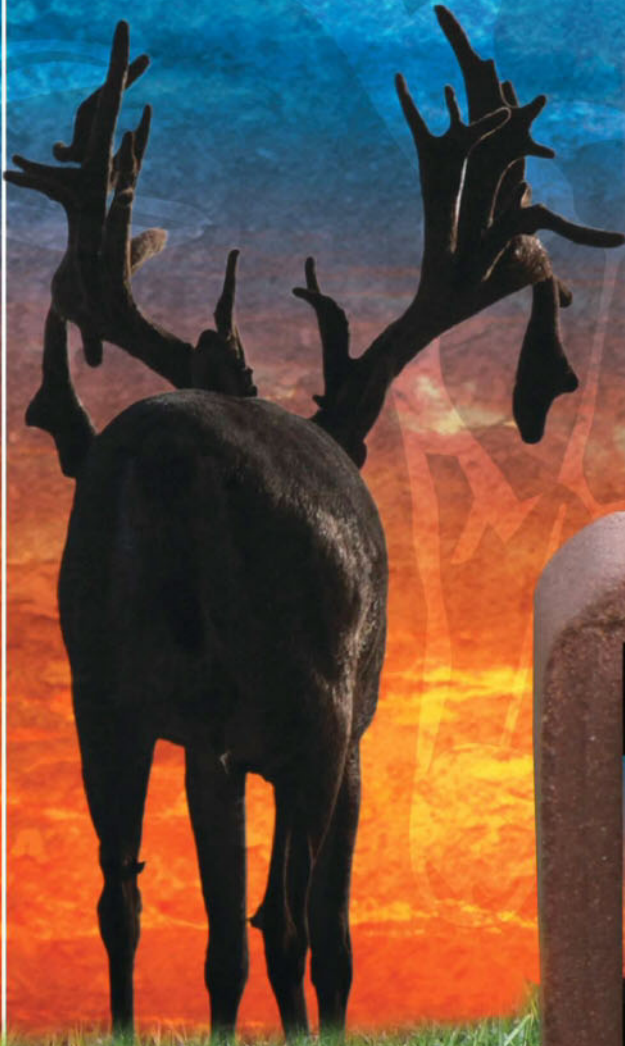
DO YOU HAVE a great whitetail story — true or otherwise? If so, submit it for consideration to: whitetail@outdoorsg.com.



WHAT CAN MINERALS DO FOR YOUR DEER HERD?

ANI-SHIELD TX4® TECHNOLOGY

- PROMOTES DEER HEALTH
- INCREASES ANTLER GROWTH
- OFFERS AMAZING ATTRACTION
- PROVIDES KEY BONE BUILDING MINERALS
- CHELATION INCREASES MINERAL ABSORPTION



WWW.ANIOLOGICS.COM - 844-372-3557



PREMIUM WHITETAIL DEER MINERALS

MANUFACTURED FOR ANI-LOGICS OUTDOORS, LLC - 1522 Sandstone Drive - Northfield, MN 55057 - © Ani-Logics Outdoors - All Rights Reserved

THE CUDDEBACK ADVANTAGE

PERFORMANCE, QUALITY & RELIABILITY.



CUDDEBACKS LOOK DIFFERENT, BECAUSE THEY ARE.

- Cuddeback cameras are designed in the USA by employees who use cameras every day - unlike many manufacturers' that have their cameras designed in China by people who may have never even seen a deer, yet alone hunted.
- Cuddeback cameras use quality, USA brand imaging components that can cost 3 to 6 times higher than those found in most competitive cameras.
- Cuddeback enclosure systems are also designed in the USA for reliability and weather protection with robust latches and thumb screws, water proof user interfaces and no exposed moving wires that are subject to breakage. We even place the SD card on the bottom of the camera to avoid rain from entering in the likely scenario where you must check your camera in rain.
- **CUDDEBACK, BUILT TO PERFORM, BUILT TO LAST.**



WWW.CUDDEBACK.COM