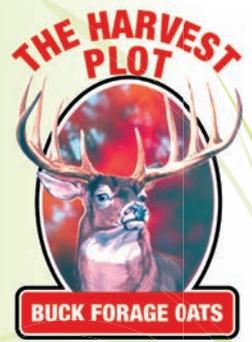


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Monsters in Nacogdoches *by Jim Holbert*

My daughter, Liz, pointed out to me that the security gate at Dr. Kroll's Research Center in Nacogdoches, Texas, looks like a setting from the movie Jurassic Park. Although there are no dinosaurs, there are without a doubt a few monsters – monster Whitetails of course!

This was my fourth tour of Dr. Kroll's center and I can honestly say that each opportunity has been a unique and eye-opening experience. Each year's new products and research are featured here in early March at the Field Days. It is common knowledge that Dr. Deer's facility is referred to as being like the UL testing ground for deer-related products. This year's attending sponsors included Bob Wallace from Realtree Nursery with his Dunston Chestnuts, Brian Hicks from Trophy Totes, Scott Farr with Skunk Fusion, Chris Hood from Golden Valley Enterprises, Chuck Cashdollar with South Texas Tripods and Feeders, and Boss Buck represented by Tom Bayer.

At the oat plot staging area on page 2, Dr. Kroll and John Butler (founder of Buck Forage Products) point out the aggressive growth of the new variety of oat that was introduced last year. These are the "Buck" variety that is the most cold-tolerant of any forage oat. The



large aggressive root system's "tillers" can be easily seen to be far superior to the Jerry Oat.

The chicory enclosure on page 2 could be called "the last chicory plant standing." This enclosed area is where Dr. Kroll tested 128 of the known chicory varieties that come up with the best variety that would pass the test for hardiness, nutrition and deer desirability.

Bob Wallace of Realtree Nursery demonstrated how



DR. KROLL SHOWS US A RECORD CLASS WHITETAIL RACK FROM HIS FACILITY.



JIM KUNTZ, CFD SALES MANAGER FROM SOUTH CENTRAL PA, ADMIRING MONSTER ANTLERS.

Continued on page 2

Monsters in Nacogdoches continued from page 1

the Dunston Chestnut trees should be planted. Bob said it was a good idea to plant them close enough to one another so that there would be successful pollination. He also recommends ventilated translucent tree tubes. Other colors of tubes are adequate but if they are not vented, be sure to drill holes in them. Another recommendation of Bob's is to use a ground matting for weed control. This eliminates the danger of having to spray herbicides too close to the tree.



DR. KROLL AND JOHN BUTLER COMPARE THE AGGRESSIVE GROWTH OF BF OATS TO THE INFERIOR VARIETIES.

In the red buckets were acorns and chestnuts. The acorns are very heavy in tannin making them extremely bitter. The chestnuts—although related to acorns—have little tannin and are great for human consumption as well. Needless to say, the chestnut supplied the forest of yesteryear with tons of Mast Crops. It's only through the hard work of three generations (Bob's grandfather, father and himself) that we can reintroduce this wonderful tree to our wildlife habitat.

We also saw a PowerPoint presentation by Dr. Kroll where chestnuts were introduced to his deer. The deer found them and began eating them less than one hour after being placed there.



Dr. James C. Kroll, Director of the Institute for White-tailed Deer Management and Research

Since 2004, Dr. Kroll produces a leading national TV show, the North American Whitetail Television, Outdoor Channel, which received the Golden Moose Award. He manages a popular website – www.DrDeer.com – which serves as an on-line education and deer management assistance. He has enjoyed tremendous exposure to the national wildlife group through publications and videos that feature his work and insight in white-tailed deer management. He holds numerous offices in state, regional and national organizations. Dr. Kroll is popular on the lecture circuit and blends technical and lay knowledge into presentations that educate, entertain and enlighten audiences enthusiastic about managing and sharing the joys of white-tailed deer management. Dr. Kroll can be contacted at 936-468-1198 or jkroll@sfasu.edu.



ENCLOSED CHICORY PLANT AREA AT THE RESEARCH CENTER

The folks from Golden Valley Enterprises demonstrated their food plot equipment again this year. This is by far the best build (American made) ATV friendly seed system available. Do yourself a favor and check out their website, www.gvtrophy.com to see the great line of products manufactured by this family-owned business. It was a real pleasure to be with these great folks from Oklahoma!



BOB WALLACE WITH A DUNSTAN CHESTNUT TREE DEMONSTRATING PROPER PLANTING METHODS.

Think Spring, Think Food Plots? MARCH 2013

Without fail, those of us in the Northeast are looking forward to Spring. Shedding some layers, getting outdoors for a walk in the woods, looking for sheds, scouting and making plans for our all-time favorite season: fall. For many of us, and certainly those reading this fine publication, part of our annual preparations for hunting season means food plots. During my travels this time of year, over and over I am asked, "What are you planting this spring?" The short answer is often met with a confused look when they hear what I am planting – "Nothing."

That's right; I don't plant very many food plots in spring. In certain situations I will plant or recommend the planting of soybeans and corn for which spring planting is a must, but: by and large ALL of my other wildlife food plots are seeded around the third week of August. While Mother Nature offers no guarantees, planting at this time of year in our region will often result in prime annual and perennial food plots, and Buck Forage Oats is a big part of my habitat program. Planting in the fall capitalizes on three factors that commonly influence my food plot success: *soil preparation, weeds, and weather.*

Early summer is the time to begin working on the soil. Everyone in the food plot business recommends a soil test, but let's face it, how many actually do a proper soil test in the real world? If, like most folks, you are going to skip the soil test, at least you NEED to know your soil PH, and if it's low (in the Northeast it's very likely) get some lime on it. Eliminate weeds & grass by spraying... and start tilling.

Mid-summer – Check the plot and evaluate weed growth; till again if you think you should. This is time well spent. We are killing any weeds that sprouted, and working the soil. Use a cultivator that breaks up the soil and try to avoid disking if you can.

Around the 2nd week of August, I go back and work the soil one last time. Working the ground in advance allows us the freedom to choose the seeding time based on predicted rainfall. Normally in the Northeast, we can count on a decent rain fall (or several) between the 3rd week of August and Sept 1. Think about how many times we get rained on over Labor Day. If you don't have the time to till in advance, be ready to till & seed when rain is imminent. I

can't stop smiling when I am pulling out a field and feel the raindrops, and we want rain within a couple days of seeding for good germination. If it isn't going to rain, don't waste your time seeding – it's worth the wait.

I recently watched a hunting show where the "TV" guys had worked the soil, then grabbed a bag of seed and started winging it around with their hand right out of the bag like they were feeding chickens! This is not the way to seed a food plot in my reality, and I can't imagine wasting the resources to till a plot and seed it in this manner! In my food plots, whether seeding by hand or with equipment, I take the time to evenly distribute and cover the seed properly, and you should too.

Decide what kind of a food plot you are going to have (annual or perennial), but no matter if it is an annual or perennial plot, my first step is always to seed with Buck Forage Oats. This seed should be covered by a little bit of soil, less than 1" deep. If this is the first time that this plot has been planted, I plan on seeding annuals for at least two seasons to build the soil and eliminate as many weeds as possible.

Continued on page 4



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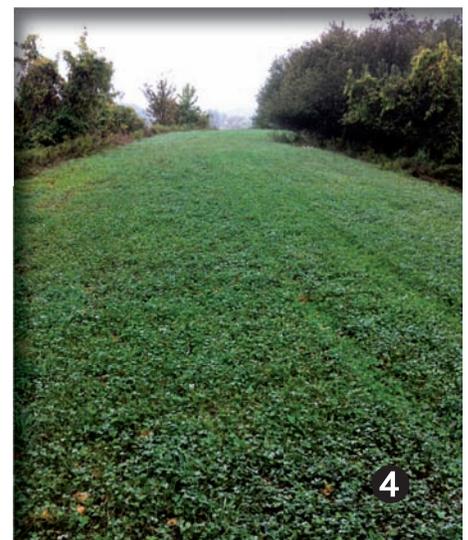


3



2

- 1 2 WEEKS AFTER SEEDING BUCK FORAGE OATS
- 2 4 WEEKS – FORAGE OATS COVERING, CLOVER UNDERNEATH
- 3 SAME PLOT – FOLLOWING MAY – OATS ARE GONE AND CLOVER IS IN! (NOTE NO WEEDS)
- 4 ONE YEAR AFTER PLANTING



4

Hunting the Oat Patch *by Glenn Wolff*

The story begins on October 31 when I arrived in South Central Kansas to hunt with John Butler on his property.

I was paired up with Rob Hughes from Texas and he was to be my guide and cameraman for the week. Rob and I had hunted hard and had seen numerous bucks and a few doe each day, but none of the bucks were mature. The morning of November 3rd we decided to hunt a ground blind that I think was called the "Oat Patch" consisting of a 3-acre plot of Buck Forage Oats. I wasn't real confident in the set-up due to the close proximity of the camp, but I went with Rob's recommendation that we hunt the Oat Patch stand in the morning. As it got light it wasn't long before we had a couple of does arrive on the far end of the plot. At around 7:30, while we were still watching them, a doe and a fawn jumped the fence about 20 yards from us and fed out in front of our ground blind. These two deer quickly became nervous because of what was following them. After a couple of minutes, Rob indicated that through his peephole in the side of the blind he could see a mature buck standing at the fence waiting to follow the doe into the food plot. Well he stood here at the fence without me being able to see him for what seemed like an eternity, but in reality it was probably only 3-4 minutes. When he finally jumped the fence and began feeding in front of our ground blind, Rob confirmed he was a mature and good buck...your call he said.

It only took one quick look and I knew I was going to shoot him, so I drew back my bow to take the shot, and he began walking closer but I wondered what was wrong with him.

His antlers were all bloody; did he just shed his velvet I wondered? No, it's not September 1st it's November 3rd. Just then the buck stopped and looked right toward the ground blind and his entire forehead was covered in blood, that's when I decided that he had been in one heck of a fight just prior to showing up here, and his combatant probably didn't fair too well. As soon as he went back to feeding and was broadside again, I squeezed the release. The arrow covered the 15 yards in a flash, the buck ran about 60 yards before piling up. He never even made it out of the Buck Forage Oat Plot.



STATS:
280# live weight
5½ years old
9 point
130" P&Y buck

Think Spring, Think Food Plots? continued from page 3

I often mix 15-20% annual (winter) rye with the Forage Oats. Once the plot is "based out" with Buck Forage Oats, you can topseed with a perennial clover mix. There are several advantages to mixing in a percentage of winter rye, especially in an annual plot to provide green cover (and green manure) for the following year. The BFO/rye mix also will hinder weed growth this fall and the following spring.

Buck Forage Oats establishes very quickly, providing quality forage for wildlife, and shelter for the clover. Clovers spend the first part of their lives putting down roots, and will be protected from browsing by the BFO. The following year the clover will spring forth, providing quality forage for years to come.

As you can see by the photos shown here, taking the time to plan, properly

prepare the soil, and planting with Buck Forage Oats, you too can have food plots like those we see in magazines, but not necessarily everything we see on TV!

About the Author: Tony Rainville operates Foothills Habitat Consultants in Upstate New York, and has been planting food plots for over 30 years. Follow his management programs in every season on Facebook & Twitter @NYRutReport.

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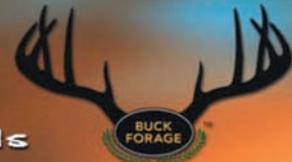
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Hunter Wallis Wins Third Major Calling Title

Hunter Wallis recently won the 2013 Jr. Grand National Turkey Calling Contest in Nashville, Tennessee. Hunter called against the best Jr. callers from across the country and for the third year in a row was crowned champion. Contestants were required to imitate four different hen sounds randomly selected from a list of twelve. This year's calls were cluck and purr, fly down cackle, cutting of an excited hen and plain yelp.

Hunter, who is a staff member of Zink Calls and Avian X decoys, also won the Pennsylvania and Virginia state Jr. Contest this year. Hunter is scheduled to be filmed this spring while hunting in Alabama, Kentucky, Pennsylvania and New York. He can regularly be seen on Avian X television which airs on The Pursuit and Sportsman channels.



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Wildlife Management News

Winter's Impact on Developing Fawns

Submitted by Bob Wagner / Photos by Jerry Rusek

For does bred during mid-November, the first trimester runs through the end of January, the second trimester runs from the end of January to the end of March and the last trimester from about the first of April through birth of fawn(s) in early June.

How does February's weather affect a developing fawn? The weather affects the quality and quantity of food available to the doe and the rate at which she uses her fat supply. The doe's fat supply will then affect the fetus during the later stage of development. Mild weather and good winter habitat allows does to slow the use of their fat reserves. Harsh weather, deep snow, high winds and/or extreme cold, accelerates the animal's use of their fat reserves. Healthy does will be fine

during most winters, but pregnant female deer entering winter in poor condition may not survive or may not be able to give birth or successfully raise a fawn.

From early April on, the third trimester is where the action is. Energy costs for pregnant does skyrocket because this is when 82% of fetal growth occurs. Gestation is costly. The total energy cost for pregnant does is 16% higher than for non-pregnant does and 92% of the in-

creased cost occur during the third trimester.

Good winter habitat (adequate food, cover and water) combats severe weather and helps ensure does have adequate fat reserves to provide the necessary nutrition at the start of the important final trimester.

(Condensed from full article, written by Kip Adams available on the Quality Deer Management Association's website: www.qdma.org.)



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Kip Adams, Director of Education and Outreach



Kip's Korner

Predators are a hot topic for deer hunters and managers throughout much of the whitetail's range. Black bears, wolves and bobcats each take their share of deer, but coyotes are receiving the lion's share of attention. Several recent research projects in the southeastern U.S. have shown significant impacts on fawn survival and recruitment rates (see pages 50-53 in the 2011 Whitetail Report; <http://www.qdma.com/corporate/whitetail-report>). Many hunters express concern over coyote predation of deer and share their desire to increase removal of coyotes in the area(s) they hunt.

If fawn survival is low in your area as a result of predation, the first step is to improve fawning cover. Provide fawns a better chance to hide and make it more difficult for coyotes and other predators to find them. The next step is to improve the quality and quantity of nutrition available to the deer herd. Healthier does produce healthier fawns that are better able to avoid predation. Importantly, North Carolina researchers Marcus Lashley and Colter Chitwood reported many fawns eaten by coyotes in their research project were malnourished and were vocalizing (bleating). Coyotes responded to these calls for quick and easy meals. Presumably at least some of these fawns would have survived if their mothers were on a higher nutritional plane. Once both of these items are addressed, coyote removal may be warranted.

From a predator control perspective, most sportsmen and women already have extremely liberal seasons to hunt coyotes (see page 16 in the 2012 Whitetail Report). However, given coyotes' high reproductive potential and ability to avoid humans, it is unlikely that hunting will sufficiently reduce coyote numbers in most situations. For most deer managers interested in reducing coyote populations, aggressive trapping programs will be required.

Similar to hunting coyotes, trapping them

Coyote Impacts & Trapping

is difficult, and most sportsmen and women simply do not have the time or skill necessary to remove a sufficient number of coyotes to effectively reduce their populations. Some population models suggest you have to remove 75 percent of coyotes annually to lower their numbers. For the vast majority of deer managers this is an unrealistic goal. However, you can temporarily reduce coyote numbers and enhance fawn survival by removing them immediately prior to fawning. For most whitetail herds the majority of fawns are born in June and July. Thus, removing coyotes in April and May can pay big dividends.

Depending on your location this may or may not be allowed. Six of 13 states in the Midwest have no closed season so you can trap coyotes during those crucial pre-fawning months. These states include Kansas, Minnesota, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio and South Dakota. Indiana and Michigan's seasons end in March, and the other 5 states' seasons end in January or February. These states include Kentucky, Illinois, Iowa, Missouri and Wisconsin. Of all the states in the Midwest only Illinois has increased the coyote trapping season in the last 5 years.

The Southeast is much more liberal than the Midwest as 6 of 11 states have no closed season (Florida, Georgia, Mississippi, Oklahoma, Tennessee and Texas). Alabama has no closed season on private lands, and South Carolina has no closed season for landowners with a predator management permit. Only Arkansas, Louisiana and North Carolina require you to stop trapping prior to April. Thus, in most of the South you can trap coyotes during the crucial pre-fawning months. Also, Arkansas, North Carolina and South Carolina have all increased the length of their coyote trapping seasons in the last 5 years as a response to sportsmen's desires and/or decreasing fawn recruitment rates.

The Northeast is very different. Only Rhode Island and Virginia have no closed season and it is only for private lands. Maine, Massachusetts and Vermont close their seasons before January; and Maryland, Rhode Island (state land), Pennsylvania and West Virginia close the season in January or February. Connecticut, New Hampshire, New Jersey and New York allow trapping in March, and Delaware has a proposed trapping season that would

end in March. Thus, in most of the Northeast you cannot trap coyotes during the crucial pre-fawning months. This may become important in the near future as many states have experienced increasing coyote harvests recently, suggesting population growth. For example, New Jersey's 2011 coyote harvest was 28 percent above the state's 5-year average, New York's increased by 39 percent, Massachusetts' increased by 48 percent, and Rhode Island's was 79 percent above its previous 5-year average. In the Northeast only Maryland has increased trapping seasons in the last 5 years.

Predators, and especially coyotes, have successfully invaded all areas of the whitetail's range; assuring that they'll be an annual variable in deer management programs throughout North America for at least the foreseeable future. Whether rural or urban and North or South, coyotes are now part of the dynamic relationship between deer and the environment. Coyotes can affect deer herds positively or negatively, so their presence can't be summed up with a broad generalization. Their actual impacts will need to be measured and monitored at the local and regional levels, and deer seasons and bag limits can be adjusted where necessary. The important thing is to realize they are now a player in many deer management programs, and as managers, we need to acknowledge them as such.

Kip's Korner is written by Kip Adams, a Certified Wildlife Biologist and Director of Education and Outreach for the Quality Deer Management Association (QDMA). The QDMA is an international nonprofit wildlife conservation organization dedicated to ensuring the future of white-tailed deer, wildlife habitat and our hunting heritage. The QDMA can be reached at 1-800-209-DEER or www.QDMA.com.

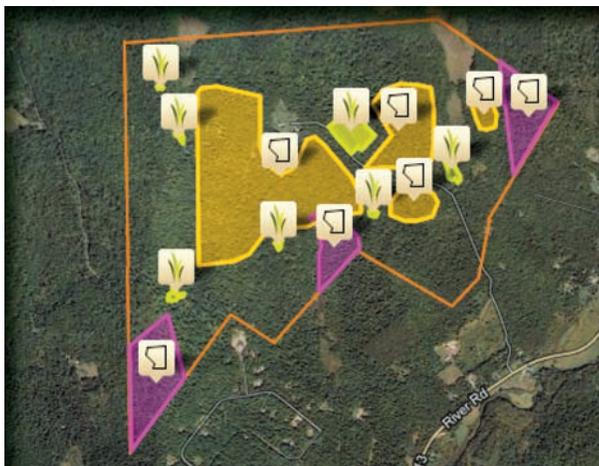


COYOTE FEEDING ON PREDATED BUCK FAWN. SCOTT BEEBE PHOTO.

Clover or Cover? *by Jim Stickles, AWB®*

Food plots are one of the most revolutionary tools that hunters use to attract deer to their properties. However, it seems that whenever you put trail cameras on food plots to monitor the deer activity, nearly all of the pictures of the big bucks occur at night. Don't get me wrong, plenty of big bucks have been killed over food plots, but if I had the choice between creating a food plot and creating cover, I'll create cover every time. Why? Because cover serves a two-fold purpose in that it provides both protection and food. Also, cover is easy to create and cheap to maintain.

Deer spend a majority of daylight hours bedded in thick cover, right? Then it would stand to reason that the most important thing to have on your property to attract and hold deer is a thick and nasty bedding area. Luckily, thick and nasty bedding areas are relatively easy and inexpensive to create. In fact, if you play your cards right, you can get paid to create them! Not only can you get paid for the timber you remove from your property, but there are also cost share programs for maintaining your property in early successional habitats for wildlife. Clear-cuts, timber stand improvements (TSIs), hinge cutting, girdling, hack & squirt, and prescribed fire are just a few of the methods you can use to create and maintain thick cover. The idea is to let sunlight hit the ground and let nature take its course.



THE IMAGE ABOVE DEPICTS A PLAN FOR A 700-ACRE PROPERTY BEING MANAGED FOR DEER. CURRENTLY, THE AREAS OF THICK COVER (PURPLE POLYGONS) ARE LOCATED FAR FROM FOOD PLOTS (GREEN POLYGONS) AND ALONG THE PROPERTY BOUNDARIES (ORANGE BOUNDARY LINE) MAKING THEM DIFFICULT TO HUNT. THE YELLOW POLYGONS ARE AREAS WHERE NEW BEDDING AREAS WERE RECOMMENDED TO BE CREATED. NOTICE THE NEW AREAS ARE MORE CENTRALLY LOCATED AND MUCH CLOSER TO FOOD PLOTS. THIS MAP WAS CREATED USING BIGGAME-LOGIC.COM.

In addition to bedding cover, areas of thick vegetation can provide a large amount of natural forage. It has been estimated that areas of early successional habitat can provide 1,000-2,000 lbs of natural forage per acre! As far as creation and maintenance are concerned, cover is simple to create and easy to maintain. The seeds are already planted in the seed bank. They just need a little sunlight so they can grow, and the early successional stage can either be reset using prescribed fire or by mechanical means.

If the only thing you have on your property to attract deer is food plots, but your neighbor has a lot of cover, guess where the deer are going to be spending a majority of their time during daylight hours? I'll give you a clue. It won't be on your property. So when you're planning your land management projects this year, be sure to take some time to create a few areas of really thick cover.

Example of Good Cover



NOTICE ALL OF THE VEGETATION AT GROUND LEVEL. THIS IS A GROWN-OVER CLEAR-CUT THAT'S ABOUT 5-YEARS-OLD.

Example of Poor Cover



NOTICE THE LACK OF VEGETATION AT GROUND LEVEL. THIS IS A MATURE PINE STAND, HOWEVER THE SAME CONCEPT APPLIES TO MATURE HARDWOODS STANDS. IF THERE IS LITTLE OR NO VEGETATION AT GROUND LEVEL, THEN IT IS BASICALLY A BIOLOGICAL DESERT FOR DEER.



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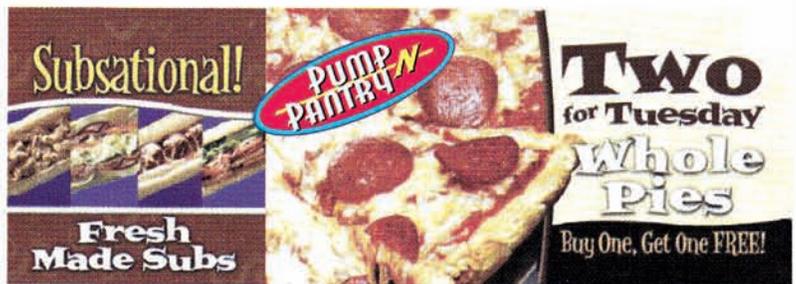
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NASP: National Archery in the School Programs

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Try to imagine a sports program where young people from grades 4 through 12 participate in a well-structured, respectful and absolutely safe shooting program. The NASP is a very impressive reality that has more expected participants than Little League baseball this year!

The first event that I had the chance to witness was a tournament sponsored by the Choconut Valley Youth Athletic Association. The tournament was named "Shoot for a Cure" and was held at the Montrose Area High School. Funds generated from this tournament were divided between the archery program and the American Cancer Society.

I was most impressed by the dedicated coaching staff and their mentoring skills with the young archers. At the blow of a whistle, 30 archers leave the shooting line to take their bows from a rack and return to shooting positions where their arrows are safely set in front of them in holders. At another signal of the whistle, archers shoot their five arrows at the targets. All coaching commands are signaled by the whistle. There is structure, silence and concentration as the arrows fly to the 10 or 15 meter targets. All archers use standard equipment as well; everyone is supplied with a Matthews Genesis bow and full length 1820 Easton arrows. There are no sights, releases, peeps or kissers buttons. All of the archers are on the same level as far as equipment is concerned.

In an age where shooting sports may look like a doomed cause, I would strongly recommend that you check out this organization and support it.



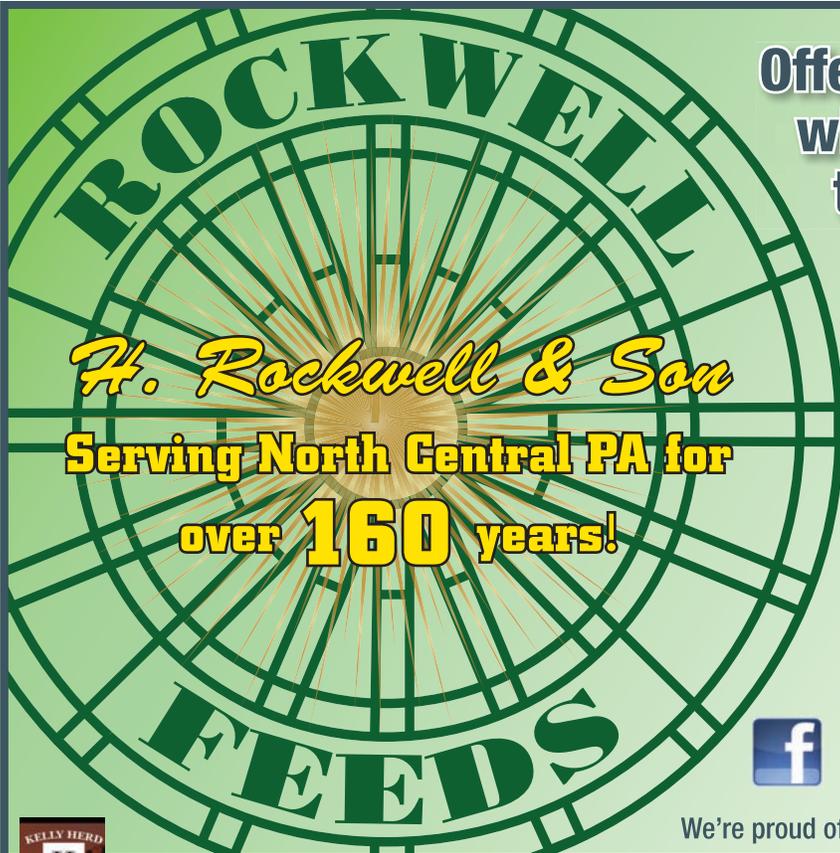
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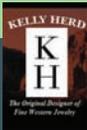
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SAVE YOUR SKIN

A DO-IT-YOURSELF TANNERY

by Brian Keyser

Wildlife Investigator, District Three Law Enforcement

It was a crisp October morning with a heavy frost blanketing the shaded corner of the alfalfa field where I stood. At my feet lay my first Ohio buck. I have harvested plenty of deer, and this eight-point was certainly no "wall-hanger." It was special, though, because it was the first deer I harvested in the Buckeye State since relocating from my native Pennsylvania. I wanted to do something special with the deer, and as a new father I chose to make a gift for my 10-month-old son.



Tagged my deer and ready to field dress it.

Removing all meat and fat using a firm plank of wood and a scraping tool.



I decided to tan the hide and make some items from the leather. It would be simple to ship the hide to a commercial tannery and have the leather I wanted. But I take pride in my primitive skills and doing things the old-fashioned way. This leather would be tanned by hand, by me, using the same methods that clothed Native Americans for thousands of years. It is known as brain tanning, and it is a great way to preserve hunting memories with unique items.

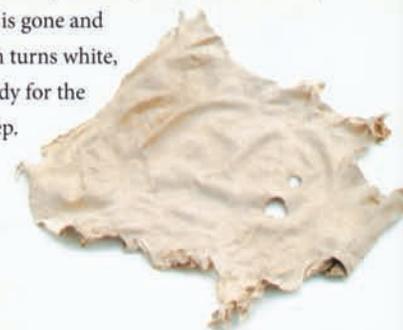
As the name implies, the process uses the animal's brain to preserve the skin and turn it into workable leather for clothing and other items. Before you say "eww!" and stop reading, you should know many substances can be used to achieve the same result. Eggs, neats-foot oil, natural soaps or any natural oil work well. Any animal skin can be tanned, with or without the hair. Here is how it works.

First, the animal must be skinned and the hide laid out flat, and the remaining meat and fat scraped off.

The hide can then be frozen or salted if you need to work on it at a later time. You also need to decide to leave the hair on or off. To leave the hair on, skip the following step.

Place the hide in a plastic tub or small garbage can and cover it with water. A deer skin needs to be weighted down because the hollow hair causes it to float. Add hydrated lime (available at you local garden supply or feed store) until no more will dissolve. Native Americans used hardwood ashes for this step. If you choose the more traditional method, add enough ashes so that an egg will float in the solution. Move the skin around in the solution once or twice a day for the next three to five days.

The skin is ready when it develops a yellow tint and feels rubbery. The hair and top layer of skin (epidermis) easily scrapes off. Make sure to remove the entire epidermis or it will leave stiff spots. Place the skin in clean water to neutralize it. To do this, soak the skin in the tub and change the water several times for a day or two. Or, weigh it down in the edge of a pond or small stream (beware of marauding turtles!). When the rubbery texture is gone and the skin turns white, it is ready for the next step.



Next, wring out the skin to remove as much water as possible. Add a few ounces of oil, half a bar of natural soap, three or four eggs, or the animal's entire brain to about 1-1/2 pints of very hot water and allow it to cool. Add the damp skin to this solution and soak it overnight. If the hair was left on, rub the solution into the flesh side and let it absorb overnight. The next day, the moisture must be removed again by wringing and twisting the skin. Removing more moisture now means less work in the next step. Again the skin can be placed in a freezer until you have time to finish.

Now the hard work starts! The skin must be stretched and pulled continuously until it is completely dry. This can be done by lacing it out on a frame and using a dull stick, or simply pulling and stretching by hand. I recommend working in the sun on a warm day and reserving a block of time to dedicate to the job. The skin must be worked until it no longer feels cool to the touch. This may take two to five hours, depending on the skin's thickness and the humidity. When finished, the skin will transform to soft, supple, white leather. This leather is functional as long as it does not get wet. The skin must again be worked until completely dry if it gets wet, or it will become stiff.

Finally, treat the leather with wood smoke to completely preserve it. The smoke contains compounds that allow the skin to become wet and retain its softness after it dries. The smoking process can be done in several ways. The simplest way is to construct a domed frame from a flexible wood, such as willow or a similar material. The frame should be sized so that the skin can be spread over it, and any exposed spots should be covered with another material to prevent smoke from escaping. Dig an 8-inch long hole that is about 1 foot deep. Start a small fire in this pit and build a few inches of hot ashes. Place dry, rotted wood in the pit to create a smoldering and smoky fire.

Next, place the frame and hide over the fire and cover areas where smoke escapes. Check the fire often to keep it smoky and from getting too hot. (It would be a shame to send all of your hard work up in flames!) Occasionally move the hide around to expose areas in contact with the frame to the smoke. When the inside of the skin develops a brown buckskin color, turn the other side down and repeat the process (Unless you left the hair on, in which case you are done!).

The finished leather can be used for a variety of projects. My family treasures the things I made them over the years. I have completed many other projects since making a buckskin shirt and moccasins for my oldest son. I made a matching set for his younger brother, my own shirt, a bag for muzzleloader hunting and many other items. Each item holds a special memory, along with the satisfaction of making something on my own without using modern shortcuts. That is something you simply cannot buy! ♣



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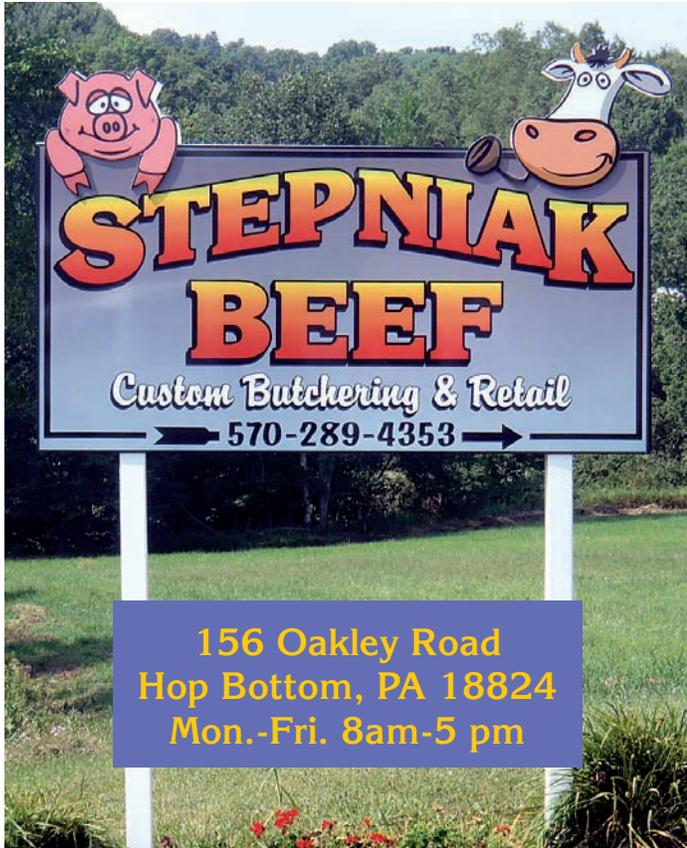
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Quality Deer Management Branch Digs Deep for Wildlife Management

Submitted by
Chris Denmon

The North Mountain Branch of the Quality Deer Management Association (QDMA) has been one of the most active branches in the country since its inception in 2003. Over the years it has done many things such as research by collecting harvest data for the last 10 years, donating time and/or money to various programs such as Hunter Sharing the Harvest, Hunts for Healing, and youth hunter education classes. It has also had antler scoring sessions, banquets, educational field days and many other activities throughout the years.

In addition to those mentioned, one of the biggest programs the branch has is its habitat improvement program. Over the last decade the branch has worked on various public-owned lands improving habitat by doing timber cutting projects, tree plantings, food plot planting, apple tree pruning and even the building and installation of Mason Bee boxes to help with the pollination of fruit-bearing trees.

Some of these projects were completed in conjunction with other groups such as local watershed organizations and local National Wild Turkey Federation chapters. Also, during some of these projects youth were involved from local scout troops working on merit badges and high school seniors working for credits on their senior projects.

Overall, thousands of man hours have been accumulated over the years while doing these habitat improvement projects that are all done on public lands where all sportsmen can benefit from the group's hard labor. During the decade of habitat improvements, the group has managed to put nearly \$50,000 of its money back into the local habitat. Those monies were raised by the branch's fundraisers like its yearly banquet or through the grants it has received from Chesapeake Energy Corporation and Safari Club International that have helped make this branch the success it has been. The volunteer man-hours are also recorded which

allows the PGC to apply for Pittman-Robertson dollars which comes from the Federal government for habitat improvement projects.

However, it is the extreme dedication and the fiscally responsible members of this group that truly make this branch the success that it is. "I am truly blessed to have officers, directors and active members that volunteer much of their time to the promotion of the branch and to sound deer management. The current board of directors and its officers have managed our branch's money well and streamlined our habitat improvement program that allows us to improve more acreage on less funding more than ever before and it continually improves," stated chapter President Chris Denmon. "This year has been no exception either and has been the best year for our habitat program ever. We either planted or maintained 27 acres of food plots on State Game Lands in our region and have just helped put an extremely important piece of equipment in the Pennsylvania's Game Commissions hands," Denmon added.

The piece of equipment that Denmon is speaking of is a Truax no-till drill. This particular piece of equipment is attached to a tractor with a three point hitch system which will allow the PGC more mobility to remote locations, can plant a variety of food plot plantings and also allows for faster planting rates which will reduce the amount of man hours per acre. This type of equipment is also beneficial regarding the problem of soil erosion and will require less fuel and equipment to get the job done.

However, this equipment does not come without expense. This particular

model has a price tag of over \$12,000. Through fundraisers, previous grants and mindful spending, the North Mountain Branch of the QDMA picked up the tab for nearly \$7,200 of the cost.

"We felt it was a great and worthwhile way to spend our money since it would allow the PGC a more expedient way in acquiring the equipment and then put it to use this spring. This equipment will help free up our group from established planting areas so we can move on to other improvement projects in the area."

"Our Habitat Chairman, Steve Germick, has been an instrumental person in the acquisition of the Truax drill but it was definitely a team effort of the branch and I'd like to thank each and every one of our board members as well as all the folks that come to our banquets and spend their hard-earned dollars for the sake of the whitetailed deer. They can rest easy knowing that the money they spend with us does not get wasted and the benefits of their generosity go far beyond the whitetail and benefit a wide variety of species in the area," Denmon added.

The North Mountain Branch, which is based in Luzerne County in northeast Pennsylvania, is very active and is always looking for dedicated sportsmen and sportswomen to get more involved in its various activities as well as leadership roles. For more information about the North Mountain Branch call 570-477-2238 or log onto www.north-mtnbranchqdma.org.

STANDING (L-R) PGC LAND MANAGER JAMES JOLLEY, JAMES ROBERTS, BILL JANOSKY, BRANCH TREASURER LINDA COOLBAUGH, BRANCH SECRETARY TOM HARMON, BUSTER COOLBAUGH. KNEELING (L-R) BRANCH VP STEVE GERMICK, JOE GERMICK, BRANCH PRESIDENT CHRIS DENMON, AND CARL CRISPELL





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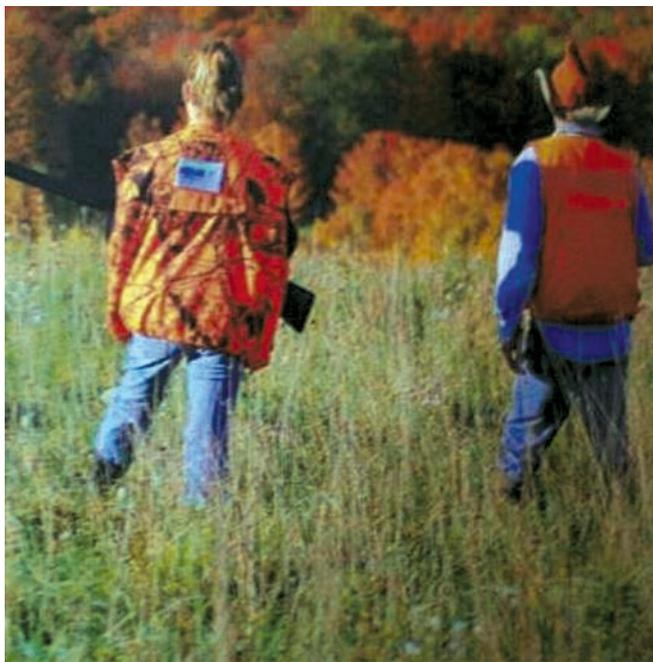
The right shooting tool for the hunt is vital for real success. A gun is built for an individual. I pheasant hunt and I would like to purchase the perfect shotgun for this endeavor. I already have the perfect location in beautiful northeastern Pennsylvania. I have the perfect bird dog. Koa is a German shorthaired pointer and is just so energetic and a joy to be with. I have a great friend and hunting partner to enjoy the experience along with all the tales we tell. My husband and I raise from egg to adult the most gorgeous pheasants you can imagine. However, I don't have the right shotgun. I borrow one most of the time. It is built for someone that is larger in stature and someone that has longer arms than mine. It is too heavy for a quick clean accurate shot. I miss a bird or two for this reason. At least, I claim that as the excuse.

How should I choose the right gun? It needs to fit the game that is hunted. I want a field

gun. A "field" gun is the general term for guns used in the field for hunting. This is usually some type of bird hunting. The field gun is light, in order to carry it in different or more difficult terrain easier. It is usually shorter than other shotguns in order to wield in brushy environments. The field gun is designed to be carried and then quickly shouldered when shot. The "sight plane" on a field gun results in what is called a "flat shooting" gun. This type of sight shoots exactly where it is aimed. This works well when the bird is flying in any direction.

So, I now know of what type of gun I am looking for, but do I want a single shot, an over/under or a double barrel shot gun? I am going to eliminate the single barrel for the simple fact I want

more than one shot at those slower flying birds (wink, wink). I think preference comes into play between the double barrel or the over/under type of shot gun. I like the over/under because my eye sees one focal point at the end of



the barrel, not two. But, preference is the best answer I can give between the two.

My problem with most shotguns is the length and the weight of the gun. I think most woman find this to be true. Bird hunting requires the hunter to be quick and versatile. If you have to position your gun you are losing precious time on the target. The gun of choice must be able to be placed without thought; the stock must not catch on your shoulder. Girls, we must find a gun that fits our arm length! I found that youth models do the trick for me. They are shorter and lighter yet accuracy and power are not compromised.

The gauge of the gun can also be confusing. The internet helped me out here.

The two common gauges in shot guns are a 12 or 20. What is the difference? The gauge is the way the bore of the gun is measured. The number or gauge is the fraction in a one pound weight of the ball used. A 12 gauge is 1/12 of a pound of weight and a 20 gauge is 1/20th of a pound. So, considering this fact, a 12 gauge shoots a wider larger area than a 20 gauge. This fact leads me to lean toward a 20 gauge due to the fact I want a smaller pattern to focus on a fast flying bird. The smaller gun will also lead to lighter recoil. Ammunition has an effect on the shot also but this will be another conversation.

Cost is my final factor that will determine my choice of the perfect bird gun. I want a gun that I can use without worry that I will damage it and hurt its value. I want a working gun. Don't get me wrong, a more expensive gun is just as perfect to take a bird as a less expensive one. On the flip side you

do not have to pay a fortune for a great gun. But, I am looking for a work truck not a Hummer! Yet, I do care about how my gun looks so I do want it to look like a Hummer but not cost like one. In the looks category, I like the wood stock instead of the more modern black or camo-colored stock. This is simply my preference.

My final choice, (well, after plunging through the internet and every gun shop within a 2-hour driving radius) I chose my perfect bird gun. I chose a youth model Stoeger Condor 20 gauge over/under with a walnut stock weighing 5.5 lbs for \$399. Good luck with your choices, but remember... choose a gun that is right for you, learn to handle it correctly, keep it safely locked away when not in use and stay safe!

Happy Hunting!!!



The Turkey Hunt

by Sherrie J. Bazin, Mentor

I have hunted since I was twelve. I love the woods and the lifestyle that Northeast Pennsylvania offers. Sharing the experiences of hunting and enjoying one of the most beautiful landscapes this world offers is nothing but pure bliss. Hunts for Healing is a volunteer organization that provides these type of experiences for our returning injured soldiers. I am a mentor that happens to be female. The hunts are organized and usually last three to four days.

This particular hunt was for Spring Gobbler. The hunt started in its usual way. The first day the soldiers arrive from various areas around this great country, apprehensive and cautious as to what is in store. The first day is always about orientation and safety. The soldiers are introduced to the mentors and paired up. The hunts are very structured and explained in detail along with hunter safety and practice with the firearms. The second day the “hunt” begins.

Ken Bach, another mentor/veteran and avid hunter, and I were paired with a young man named Gene that served as a Marine. One of his injuries causes balance problems so walking on uneven terrain and looking past where you would walk can be tricky. Gene is also an American Indian that actively lives his heritage. Gene, Ken and I discussed our hunting plan—Gene would be sitting just on the edge of a knoll and Ken and I would be back further into the denser trees calling Ben Franklin’s choice of our country’s national bird.

The sun would be rising soon so as a team we set foot to our destination. It was not a long trail through the woods but at times the terrain was steep and with the morning dew, a bit slippery. Gene did well, side stepping an occasional branch that could upset his balance. We spoke a bit as we walked about what to expect and about the feelings of anticipation of the hunt itself. Gene settled down next to a tree of his choice facing down the ravine. We felt it was the perfect spot for a good hunt. Ken took the furthest position away from Gene and I sat under a sleeping oak between the two men. In the far distance we heard a Tom calling out to his girls. Ken and I both answered with our favorite box calls. The morning sun

crested the sky and we were hunting! A closer Tom became interested and was coming into our area. His calls became louder and more determined. Our calls answered the Tom’s and we felt Gene was going to have a turkey encounter for sure. Gene had his back to me and continued to face down the ravine but the Tom had now come around us and was approaching behind where Gene was facing. How the ravine was formed and where Gene was sitting it sounded like the turkey was coming up the ravine to Gene. However, from where Ken and I were sitting we could physically see Franklin’s bird! He was dancing his way right behind Gene. His tail feathers spread in a perfect fan and his beard was bouncing off the ground. All I was thinking is *Gene turn your head!!!* There was no way to get his attention.

The bird climbed the hill with his girls just ahead of him. His calls of romance sounded in the morning air. He danced and entertained for better than twenty minutes. The bird passed in front of me; I could have hit it with a long stick. What a beautiful creature. He had no idea of what surrounded him and off he traveled to chase his female flock another day. His sounds dissipated into the air. What an experience to watch nature as it was intended. By this time Gene could tell the sounds are coming from the far distance. We regrouped and had a great laugh. I sat where Gene sat in order to get the full picture of what had transpired. His eye level was just below the land level behind him. No wonder he could not see or properly hear the bird. We sat him just shy of the perfect shot! A hunting lesson well-learned and the hunt continues for another day.

Gene and the others returned to base and the soldiers’ stories were told. Each had excitement in their voices and a spark in their eyes as they recounted their new adventures. Lunch was consumed over laughter and ribbing of the one that got away. It is truly a precious gift to be able to witness our boys, now men, returning to a way of life they fought so hard for with new friendships and in a county that truly appreciates their service and sacrifice. We all continue to heal, hunt and laugh another day.



Healing wounded warriors with outdoor challenges

Not Just a Hair Cut!

by Ken Bach, Mentor and Veteran

Who would have thought that going to get a haircut would lead to a life-changing event? It started about five years ago when I was asked if I'd be willing to take a wounded soldier turkey hunting in the spring. The person cutting hair was one of the founders of Hunts for Healing, an organization that is devoted to helping wounded veterans of recent wars to put aside some of their worries for a few days to enjoy outdoor events, such as hunting and fishing. To date they have held many successful outings for turkey, early muzzleloader, archery, flint lock for deer and pheasant hunts, as well as predator hunts and fishing trips. This year they held the first veteran 5-day family event at Camp Lackawanna. It was a huge success according to the four families that attended.

Let me get back to that first hunt that I took part in. Three of us were teamed up with a Special Forces Major that had

lost a leg in Iran. The first morning of the hunt we also had a news team from a local television station along. The turkeys didn't read the script and failed to show; however, on the second morning after changing locations we were successful in calling in two long beards and Keas made a good shot on his first turkey. It was a great feeling to see the joy it brought to someone who had given so much for our country. It was only his third day on a prosthetic leg but he didn't let the pain stop him from getting around the woods. He has since re-deployed for another tour.

I got to help on a pheasant hunt at Ring Neck Ridge in Laceyville. The hunt was really special because Dennis had lost both legs in combat. They were removed about where your pants pockets would end so he was wheelchair bound. With the chair in the back of an ATV he was able to shoot pheasants that we flushed after my dog Cody pointed them. Den-

nis was a real inspiration to all who met him; not letting anything stop him from doing the things he loved to do. As if he hadn't given enough of himself, he gave his auto-loader shot gun to a fellow service man who was finally able to bring himself to shoot again for the first time in eight years. Dennis was, in turn, given an over/under shotgun by one of the regular mentors for Hunts for Healing. He came back for our spring gobbler event and was the first one to score on a bird!

Everything is provided free to those who participate. Volunteers from the community and local churches help to make this special by providing food and preparing meals as well as interacting with the veterans. If you wish to get involved or donate call 570-869-1333 (Mindy). Hunts For Healing email is info@huntsforhealing.org.

Every Day is Memorial Day! Pray for Our Veterans and Country

We especially thank Cabot Oil & Gas and Ayres-Stone Post 5642 Montrose, PA for making our veterans' voices a little louder by making copies of this magazine available to our veterans at home and abroad!

Thank you



DMAP: A Split-Season Regulation Loophole

by Jim Stickle, AWB®

During my time as a crew leader for the Pennsylvania Game Commission (PGC), several people expressed how they were frustrated with the split-season regulation. The two typical complaints I heard were that 1) the regulation did not allow friends and family members to harvest an antlerless deer during the first couple of days, which was the only time that they would be present to hunt, and 2) landowners practicing quality deer management (QDM) had a difficult time meeting their antlerless harvest objectives. Luckily, there's a loophole, but the loophole comes with little paperwork.

Those enrolled in the deer management assistance program (DMAP) are allocated a certain number of antlerless coupons based on the acreage of cultivated land (1 coupon/5 acres) and non-cultivated land (1 coupon/50 acres) they hunt on. DMAP tags CAN be used during the first five days of firearms season in split-season wildlife management units. Additionally, unlike regular antlerless tags where hunters compete with each other on a first-come/first-serve basis, DMAP tags are a guaranteed tag. So if you want to guarantee yourself, a friend, or a family member an antlerless tag with no fuss, DMAP can help you accomplish that task.

There is a common misconception that the enrolling in DMAP requires opening your land for public hunting. This is not true. It is an option, but not a requirement. If you opt to keep your information private, your coupons will be sent to you directly, and you can distribute however many you please to whomever you please, but each hunter can only receive two coupons.

The final thing you need to know about DMAP is the application process falls within a very narrow window. The applications are available on the PGC website starting in May, and they are usually due by June 1st. For more information on DMAP go to: <http://www.pgc.state.pa.us> and click on "DMAP" in the "Quick Clicks" menu (see image on right). Not everybody qualifies for DMAP, but if you are frustrated with the limitations of the split-season regulation, then it is worth looking into. Good luck!

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Middle Creek Wildlife Management Area

by Donna Salko

The annual spring show is in Middle Creek, folks. The extravaganza will include over 100,000 Snow Geese, with cameo performances by Tundra Swans, lesser Snow Geese, the Ross' Goose, Canada Goose and other assorted waterfowl. *You don't want to miss it!*

The dazzling display of down and feathers draws thousands of visitors each year to Kleinfeltersville, PA, home of the Pennsylvania Game Commission's Middle Creek Wildlife Management Area. Whether they come by car, truck or horse and buggy, yearly guests congregate for the spectacular spring event. The hustle and bustle, the honking and gagging and the massive fluttering noises can be compared to downtown New York City or Boston on a busy morning commute. The Snow Geese use the Atlantic Flyway to migrate to northern nesting grounds in the Canadian Arctic. Mornings before 10 AM, and the evening hour before dusk are the most active time for the geese, but spontaneous outbursts of flight can and do happen throughout the day.

As with the beginning of so many wildlife success stories, this generous display of nature wasn't always the case. The 1960's population of Snow Geese was at an all-time low. Today in North America Snow Geese numbers swell to over 1,000,000. At Middle Creek over 150,000 Snow Geese, 8,000 Tundra Swans and 10,000 Canada Geese have been documented. These numbers become problematic for the PGC and U.S. Fish and Wildlife as Snow Geese can decimate their own wintering ground and nesting sites if their numbers are not kept in check. Controlled hunting by permit is allowed at Middle Creek and increased bag limits with season extensions have allowed hunters to trim excessive Snow Geese numbers. Conservation biologists monitor population flux and habitat degradation in an effort to keep an acceptable balance at Middle Creek.

The 6,200-acre central PA wildlife management area was established in 1973. The 400-acre lake is an important staging ground for all types of waterfowl but particularly the Snow Geese. Snow Geese start arriving in very early spring. By the second week of February – weather dependent – there could be 40,000 geese. Numbers climb as the migration season advances. Over 250 bird species have been recorded at this site. Audubon's IBA designation certifies the importance of the area. Approximately 280,000 visitors from 49 states and 21 countries will travel through Middle Creek to witness the spectacle of migration. Self-guided driving tours begin March 1st and there are 20 miles of walking trails throughout.

Snow Geese will linger at Middle Creek until a good wind from the south pushes them farther north. The lake will quiet down considerably with the exit of the snows but there is still a resident population of ducks and geese who remain at Middle Creek year around. Spring at Middle Creek is a paradise for Snow Geese, Tundra Swans and ducks with an occasional Great Blue Heron or Osprey. Many of the songbirds will also be migrating at that time, notably the Red Winged Blackbird, Blue Bird, warblers and sparrows. It is a great time to visit. Hunters, birders, tourists and wildlife enthusiasts all walk away from this thunderous introduction to spring enriched by their experience at Middle Creek.



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