

WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT News

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Hunts for Healing

This photo may not be considered the best shot of the year by some but it's definitely my pick. For me, it's all about the hunter, not the deer. All too often, we deer hunters can be a little snobbish over what "they" would shoot.

Pictured here is my friend and wounded warrior Doug Betz. He is a father of two, Hunts for Healing activist and employee, taxidermist, and a darn good hunter. Doug is holding up three fingers, letting me know he tagged out by harvesting this buck and two doe out of the Buck Forage Oats food plot he planted. I absolutely commend Doug on how he manages to make quality time with his family and be a successful hunter while battling back from surgeries and overcoming health issues.

Doug is also a Hunts for Healing mentor and encourages anyone who would like more information on veteran hunting opportunities to call the Hunts For Healing headquarters at 570-869-1233.



My first experience with Hunts for Healing was in August of 2013; my family and I were invited to come down to the "Family Camp" they have every year. I was very nervous at first meeting people I didn't know, going somewhere I had no idea what was ahead of me, being in a large group of people, and also what seemed to be a road to nowhere. As we drove closer to our destination, I had gotten very anxious and nervous and I wanted to turn around and not attend this event. I took a few deep breaths and said, "NO! You are not going to turn around, because this may benefit you and your family in

Continued on page 2

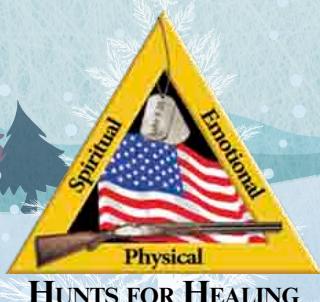


Wounded Warriors
Laurie Goodridge
and Ed Afanador
celebrating Ed's big
doe.

Mentor Russ Wagner and Laurie share the moment of her first deer. Good shot, Laurie! (I'm not surprised – I saw her target practicing.)



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HUNTS FOR HEALING



Hunts for Healing continued from page 1

the end," but as I said, I had no idea what I was getting into. So we get there and I walk in not knowing what to do or who I am supposed to talk to, shaking, nerves are racing! And then comes Mindy – she took my family, husband and two kids under her wing like she had known us for years and had only known us for minutes at that time. My nervousness subsided; we met a lot of the other mentors who volunteer for Hunts for Healing. After that all of those feelings I was having were gone.

These mentors and volunteers are the most awesome people I have ever met... they are there for you, they want you to have a great time and that we did! My kids had a blast with so much there for them to do: swim, crafts, bouncy house, outdoor games, and all the while these volunteers just want you to have a relaxing time. In the five days we were there, I saw the most compassionate people I have ever met. They took my kids and did various things with them while the husband and I tried to relax and be ourselves for a while. There were days the men did wood carving, the women did a painting craft. We made a family flag. Yes, we did have time to do this together as a family but the experience that I had was phenomenal and so glad to this day that I have met that wonderful group of people!!!

In October I was asked to come back for their muzzle loader event – my answer was a resounding yes, I will be there! I left the kids and husband home this time, I can't even express or say how good I feel about the people that mentor and volunteer. I showed up the first day to hunt (never hunted in my life before). I didn't have cold weather things to go out into the field to hunt with, but the mentors I had had everything for me to borrow and use if I didn't have it. These mentors care about what you want and how you feel; it seems to me it's all about the vet at any of the Hunts for Healing events. No one is ever left behind or left out because they may have extremely different medical issues compared to the other vets there with you. So went out hunting the first evening and shot a deer for the first time ever. It was such an awesome adrenaline rush and that's what I love!! But it was raining and we couldn't track the deer, so never found that one. Went out the second day with

Kenny Bach (awesome mentor and all around guy!!) shot my first doe ever – she was running right at me. Awesome! Definitely put a huge smile on my face. The third day they took me out bird hunting with their trained dog that finds the pheasant for you – the way those dogs work is so amazing! Well... got me a pheasant; great experience! The last night there they had these coon hunting guys come up, so we went out coon hunting. First coon I couldn't even see it in the tree so I had someone else shoot it. Let me tell you, when that thing hit the ground I thought he had shot a baby bear out of the tree, this coon was so big! But their dogs are also amazing treers. It is so great to see how a dog can actually work to your benefit! The dogs had treed the second coon, and I could see its eyes plain as day. Got the eyes in the sights and shot, and here comes my first ever raccoon down the tree! Then we called it a night around 11pm; the caring and love vibe that you get from these amazing people is all well worth the visit! Like I have said many other times, the feeling that I get from the mentors, and being able to just sit and chat for hours, is absolutely the best therapy I have ever had. This is a type of therapy no VA could ever give me! I want to thank all mentors and volunteers for the hard work they put into making Hunts for Healing a remarkable place to visit. Most of all I want to thank Mindy and John Piccotti for the awesome job they do with not just me as a veteran but to ALL veterans that cross their paths!!!

By Laurie Goodridge



The Hunts For Healing gang with Laurie.

Pray for Our Veterans and Country Every Day!

We thank Ayres-Stone VFW Post
5642 Montrose, PA, along with Buck
Forage Products and Pump'n'Pantry,
for making our veterans' voices a
little louder by making copies of this
magazine available to our veterans
at home and abroad!



Thank You

BOCES Program

by Zach Whittaker

DCMO BOCES Robert W. Harrold Campus is located on Route 206 between the towns of Masonville and Trout Creek, NY, bordering the Catskill area of the state. This BOCES is comprised of nine different school districts in the area. Students from these school districts may attend BOCES to learn through Career & Technical Education (CTE), from heavy equipment operation to cosmetology. The average student can spend his or her junior and senior years of high school attending one of these programs for half of their school day.

One of the popular CTE programs offered by BOCES is Conservation and Heavy Equipment Technology. Here students gain valuable knowledge in three main areas: mechanics, including small engine and heavy equipment; heavy equipment operations; and forestry/wildlife management. Conservation students will also be involved in "operating" businesses each year such as shop repair, maple syrup operations, firewood sales and Christmas wreath sales.

Wildlife management is a unit that is covered in the early fall through the end of November of the students' senior year. Students will learn an array of topics in this unit such as tree and plant identification, wildlife identification, chainsaw operation, agricultural equipment operations, building food plots and improving wildlife habitat.

The student favorite each year is food plot construction, followed by a two-month-long trail cam study. Students begin each year by disking, dragging and preparing a 1.5-acre piece of land that was originally an abandoned hay field, grown up with goldenrod and multi-floral rose bushes. Students gain valuable math and science skills during this time completing lessons with program integrated math and science instructors concerning acreage calculation, seed, lime and fertilizer rates, soil tests, soil pH and a lesson on soil horizons. Once a seed bed has been prepared, students apply the correct amount of lime, fertilizer and seed to the area and finish the food plot. The food plot is split evenly into two $\frac{3}{4}$ -acre sections and two types of wildlife seed is planted. This gives students the opportunity to study which type of food whitetail deer prefer over others during the months of October, November, and early December using trail cameras.

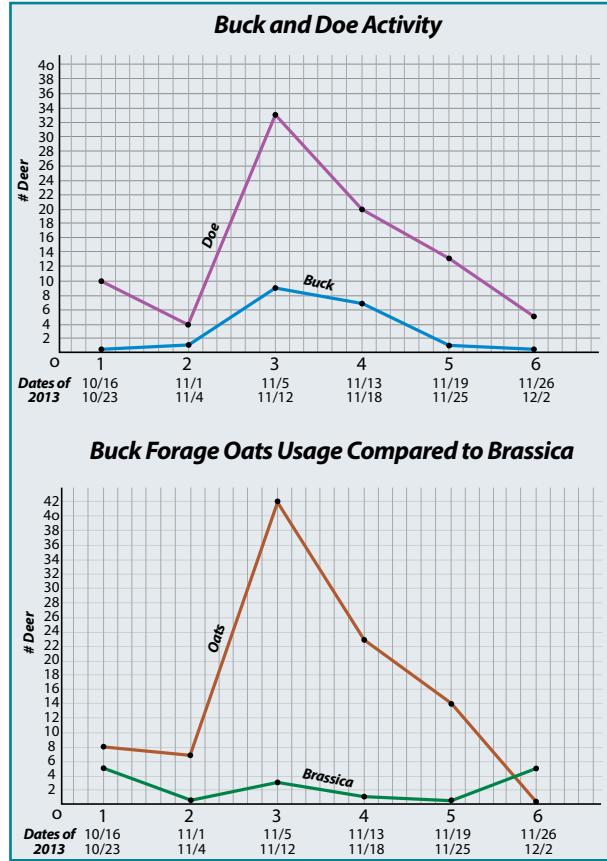
Fall 2013 Trail Camera Study

This fall the students planted brassica and Buck Forage oats. The forage oats have been a long-standing "winner" of the trail camera study the past couple of years, so the students have set out to find a seed that will compete with one of the apparent favorites of the whitetails. Two trail cameras were placed, one in each section of the food plot, to test which seed was most visited by the deer on campus. With any study there are many variables, and some of the variables in this research to keep in mind are that school starts in the first week of September and this year's food plot was not seeded until September 18. This may have an impact on the maturity that the plants were able to reach before the deer began to feed on them. Also the oats were planted nearest to the adjacent woodlot which could result in getting pictures of deer walking past the camera in the forage oats on their way to the brassica patch, as well as everyday problems encountered such as battery life, weather and a very healthy black bear population!



Shown below is the result of our study that students graphed on paper with their BOCES math instructor and was put into digital format thanks to the BOCES Visual Communications students. One of the interesting findings this year was the obvious trend in buck and doe movement. Especially through the month of November, as the doe movement spiked, so did the buck and the activity of both peaked in the

very same week, then fell off dramatically after the opener of New York's November 16th gun season. Students predicted (based on this graph) that the 2013 rut peaked the week of November 5th and stayed consistent through the 18th. As far as the seed comparison, there was no comparison according to the trail cameras. The oats were an overwhelming favorite once again. In fairness to the brassica, it did overtake the oats in popularity early in December. This may have been because the oats were completely eaten by the deer or simply because as the weather turned, so did the whitetails' habits.



Fred and Ilse's "Green Mile"

Article by Fred Ehmann

This is the Ehmann gas line that was planted with Buck Forage oats, clover, and chicory along with other seed that was state required. We had taken aerial photos of the area for earlier articles when construction of these lines was in the early stages, but this is the finished product.

Fred and Ilse have been more than pleased with the results of their seeding program. They have never observed more deer and turkey on their property and Fred was amazed to see how they selectively browsed the green blades of oats out of their green mile. His only complaint is that the deer are messing up the cross country skiing by digging through the snow for the Buck forage Oats (he was kind of kidding!).



We have these friends who are people of strong faith that come from very modest means. Years ago, to feed a family of sixteen (6 boys, 8 girls) deer hunting season required many tags and a successful harvest. At an early age, boys and girls learned gun safety, marksmanship, and maintenance. Hunting skills with dad's guidance became ingrained. Today, this family is spread from Alaska (serving with the coast guard) to Uganda (serving as missionaries). The faith and foundational hunting skills set into this family express the American spirit.

Each year they hunt on our land. We expected the father (with two sons still in high school) on the opening of doe season, but Zach, an engineer at Penn State, also found time to come from suburban Philadelphia. At dawn, the weather was perfect, crisp, and cold with 2" of fresh snow.

It allowed them to play our pipeline right of way like a Stradivarius violin. Along the nearly 3/4th mile (100 ft. wide) line, a mix of Buck Forage Oats matured by the warm fall weather now supports a strong deer population (turkeys, too). Zach and his brother Levi (who is his senior class president) hunted from one end with Dad and youngest son the other.

The harvest? By late morning, three doe were selected from the substantial herd. Turkey flocks found by both teams almost disturbed the hunt. Our joy finds expression in this family and what they do here!



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Solitary Confinement Buck *by Jim Holbert*

As I sat in the ground blind early afternoon on November 10, two words came to my mind – solitary confinement!

I was hunting this archery season with outfitter and friend Wendel Crosby, owner of Bedrock Big Bucks in South Central Ohio, and it was the peak of the whitetail rut. There is never a sure thing in harvesting a great buck, but my three hunting companions Dave, Dan, Scott and I were more than a little optimistic. We had seen trail camera pictures of deer on Wendel's property and we were less than a mile from his lodge when we saw a huge beer-bellied twelve point standing at the edge of a cut cornfield.

With hunting as it is, weather conditions often times save a lot of deer from being killed. For two days, extremely high and swirling winds hindered us, and the deer were in lockdown mode. We sighted a few small buck, but local hunters and other camps also confirmed the lack of movement.

The next-to-last day of our hunt, Wendel suggested that I try one of his ground blinds. He had a good feeling about this stand and knew that a shooter was eventually going to cruise through the site. He dropped me off around 2:30p.m. and told me not to touch any of the window openings on the blind. They were all pre-set and deer would notice any change to them.



This is where the notion of solitary confinement comes into play! There are two window openings in this blind. The one facing front gives a narrow view of the horizon; about the size of a mail slot on someone's front door. The other window to the left of the mail slot is a small triangle the size of a folded American flag. This was definitely not a panoramic view of Ohio's deer domain. I left this stand without seeing anything alive that day. It was well after dark and I didn't bust any deer upon leaving.

Now there is one day left to hunt and we had to form our battle plan for the morning. I again asked Wendel what he suggested and he said what I thought he would, "Back to solitary confinement!" This time I would be in the blind at 5:30a.m. and I would conduct a mock rattle battle. Wendel's instruction for rattling in a buck is to imitate the sound of two big buck having a knock down, territorial brawl. I was fixed up with a set of extremely large antlers and these instructions: Quietly exit the ground blind around 8:30, start knocking the snot out of the antlers, smack them together like you were trying to break them, kick leaves around and shake saplings, rattle the antlers some more and get back in the blind.

I was smiling as I got back in and started peeking out of the mail slot. I was thinking, "Man, I hope no one was watching that. Surely I must look like a possessed madman!" Less than five minutes went by when I stopped smiling.

A huge buck was sneaking right to left along the trail less than 20 yards in front of me. I didn't bother counting points, I just wanted to make a good shot.

He slid in front of my little triangle opening. When I had a good quartering shot behind his shoulder I took it and saw my knock strike where I had aimed! The deer collapsed about a hundred yards below my blind on the steepest slope you can imagine. (Believe me, Ohio is not all flat open fields!) I called Wendel to tell him I had killed a huge eight point and he and Pappy arrived on the scene about 20 minutes later.

I showed the guys where the deer was and Wendel made a split second decision for which I will be forever grateful. "We ain't dragging that deer," he said. "I'll go get the boys from Maine who are staying at Jody's camp." The boys from Maine happened to be six rugged lobster fishermen. The 240 lb. buck was yanked up that steep slope in less than ten minutes.

I think if there is a moral to this story it would be, listen to the expert. The blind I didn't care for was awesome and the rattling technique was part of a great experience. Always be ready and willing to learn something new and pay the price for your Maine lobster without whining... God knows these fishermen deserve it!

Start with a Good Foundation *by Tony Rainville*

According to popular literature, any serious hunter knows that you can't kill a mature buck in a "Food Plot." Oh sure, the "TV hunters" do it all the time, but they are hunting "unpressured deer" on "intensely managed properties," right? No doubt about that. Unlimited time and money can go a long way towards harvesting a mature buck, but does that mean that the "average Joe hunter" can't create an opportunity for a mature buck using food plots? For starters, if you are practicing QDM and planting food plots, you are probably not an "average Joe hunter." Let's take a look at the role food plots played in the harvest of a 5-year-old buck in New York, where the "average hunter" has a less than 1% chance of harvesting a buck in this age class.

While there were so many variables that came together for us in 2013, and certainly elements of "luck" that came into play on November 2 – the focus of this article is the role that food plots played in this chess game of survival and the execution of a specific plan. There is no doubt that food plots make a difference in my QDM Program, the health of "our" deer herd, and my hunting success.

Food plots have always been a part of my management strategy on the farm, and Buck Forage Oats has been a foundation in this for 15 years of my rotational plantings. Our area has good sandy-loam soils and a mix of agriculture – red and white oaks in the small woodlots, clearcuts, and literally hundreds of apple trees. Food has never been a problem here, so why plant food plots? One answer is diversity: created by simply offering the deer something different than anything else in the area. I started small by any farming standards, in an old pasture area – in fact – the food plot that we killed this buck in was the very first area that I opened up for a food plot back in 1998 using a 3-wheeler and hand tools. As you can see by the picture above it is a small plot about 100 yards long, and that first year we had to fence it off to keep the horses out of it, thus dubbed the "Fenced Plot."

Initially, my farmer friend that owns the land scoffed at the concept – why would deer bother with a food plot when we have corn, alfalfa, winter rye, apples and acorns in abundance? That was, until he saw how much this small plot was utilized. After the first two years (at his suggestion), we actually took small fields out of agricultural production and dedicated that ground to wildlife food plots. This is a casual hunter that decided to forsake revenue-producing land and give it to the wildlife. We certainly didn't need a utilization cage to realize the value of these plantings.

These former agricultural fields of 1.5 – 2.5 acre food plots became the cornerstones of my food plot program, and the focus of my plantings for many seasons. I rotate crops and minimize fertilizer usage and Buck Forage Oats have always played a major role in my program. In fact, I will never be without Buck Forage Oats – whether it is an annual plot or



a freshly seeded clover/perennial, Buck Forage Oats has always been my foundation planting.

Over time, I learned that these larger plots are not likely a location to actually harvest a mature buck. That's fairly common knowledge now, but it was not the case when I began practicing QDM. Around 2011 I decided to bring the plots to the deer and began clearing and planting smaller plots in abandoned pasture land, some that were hunted, and some that were actually in our sanctuary. The development of these smaller plots in the cover changed the habits of the deer herd in general. Now I would watch the same doe family groups on an all day sit, and these deer never moved more than 200 yards over the course of an entire day. As a by-product, mature buck sightings and opportunities increased as they traveled between these "micro-plots" in search of does. This concept gets a lot of play in current deer management literature, but actually putting it into practice takes time, planning, and effort.

This particular "Fenced Plot" had always been primarily a clover-based plot, turned under and seeded with Buck Forage Oats every three years or so, when grass and weeds would start to overtake the clover. In the Spring of 2013 I had developed a plan to screen the north side of the plot with corn

in order to hide this plot from a known buck bed, with the southern half planted in soybeans, both "Roundup Ready" varieties. My objective was to reduce the grass and weeds in the plot and eventually return it to clover. As expected, due to the small size and corresponding browse pressure, the beans never amounted to much, and the corn was devoured as soon as the ears set silk, but the ground was bare of any weeds and grass. In late August the soybeans were tilled under and seeded with Buck Forage Oats, and top-seeded with clover, a key element in my food-plot system. The corn stalks remained standing to provide the necessary screening cover in this situation. Had I not needed the screen cover, the corn would have been plowed under as well. Unlike many other popular plantings, I know that Buck Forage Oats will take the pressure, and maintain the production and attraction well into our northeast winters.

Early in the afternoon of November 2, my son Brady and I were headed in to hunt this farm. There were plenty of other mature bucks that my son would have happily harvested, but the Big 7 was clearly on our minds. The wind was right to hunt the Fenced Plot and I told my son to take that stand as I knew he would definitely see deer, which I think is important for a younger hunter. We parked a long way away on a neighboring farm, in order to not disturb the potential bedding sites that we thought he was using. As the afternoon wore on, I was on the receiving end of numerous texts about feeding deer, yearling bucks harassing does, blowing, and all sorts of deer activity while in a nearby woodlot I had only seen a blind turkey.

Continued next page

When I saw my phone light up with a call from Brady right at dusk – and he said he had shot the Big 7 – I couldn't get down the tree fast enough! When I got to the plot, he was still shaking in the treestand. He was unsure of the hit but I found decent blood where he exited the plot and headed for the property line; we backed out and I called my neighbor. While numerous does and fawns were trying to feed in the Fenced Plot, coming in and out of the small opening, yearling bucks were cruising and harassing them all afternoon. At last light the old buck appeared at the edge of the plot, put his head down and started feeding on the Buck Forage Oats, paying little interest to a nearby doe and no attention to my son perched less than 20 yards away on the plot edge. We had a light rain when we started the track with my neighbors' help and lantern, but the buck never made it across the property line.

The moment when we found him in the creek bottom was bittersweet for all three of us – as we had planned our entire season for the pursuit of this particular buck. For us, the ultimate trophy is age, and when he hit the scales at 214 lbs. dressed, we all knew what we had accomplished, and that there is always next season.

About the Author: Tony Rainville has been developing wildlife habitat in the Northeast for over 20 years, manages a QDM Cooperative in NY, is a QDMA Certified Land Inspector and active volunteer. He owns Foothills Habitat Consultants providing full-service QDM wildlife management programs. You can find him on Facebook and follow him on Twitter @NYRutReport



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We Plant Food Plots!

Thermal Cover An Essential Component of Winter Wildlife Habitat

Article by Scott Sienko

As the 2013 draws to a close, the temperatures begin to dip low and we prepare for winter to begin its full swing. While we are cozy indoors, loosening our belts from Thanksgiving and holiday dinners, the local wildlife is beginning to find that food is growing scarce. Being proactive with managing wildlife habitat is a year round job, just because planting is done, and deer season is on its way out for the year doesn't mean that it time to simply wait for the spring thaw. Now is the perfect time to begin making observations for priming your habitat to be a great spot for wildlife to hole up for the winter.

With the current snow cover it is much easier to notice where deer and other game have been traveling regularly. Take note of this; because placing thermal cover along these travel corridors will make the game want to take shelter in these areas. Thermal cover helps retain heat; examples of this are trees and shrubs that maintain their leaves/needles throughout the winter. Conifers like hemlock are what we generally see in local areas. However if you intend to plant seedlings for future thermal cover, it is recommended to try other species such as spruce or pine, this is because the eastern hemlock is in decline due to the hemlock wooly adelgid. Planting these other species ensures that your ther-

mal cover will provide shelter for wildlife for plenty of winters to come in the future.

Landowners with larger fields can plant swaths of warm season grasses to create thermal cover for upland game, serving as cover year round and thermal cover as it grows colder. Birds like pheasants are already clustering into small flocks to conserve heat at this time of year, with this tall thick grass at their disposal they have a buffer from the wind as well as places to hide from predators. Another effective way of creating cover is a brush pile. Things like fallen treetops, evergreen branches, even your Christmas tree (once you're ready to discard it of course), are all components that can create effective shelter. The wildlife that will benefit from this varies- from small winter songbirds, to squirrels, and even deer will appreciate this.

So while you enjoy your holiday cheer, take some time to think about how well your local wildlife will fare on your property. After all, we are simply the stewards of Penn's Woods- it's up to us to continue to make sure that all its residents continue to thrive so that we may continue to enjoy the bounty they give us, season after season.

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The Institute For Whitetail Deer Management and Research

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Pennsylvania Game Commission Speakers at QDMA Meeting

The Susquehanna Branch of the Quality Deer Management Association (QDMA) hosted an open meeting in November at the Central Conservation Club in South Montrose. This meeting featured speakers from the Pennsylvania Game Commission (PGC), Wildlife Conservation Officer Mike Webb, PGC Food and Cover Corps Foremen Chuck Wiseman and Darren Pettyjohn.

The focus of PGC Wildlife Officer Webb's talk was an update of his current work activities, sportsmanship and how hunters and landowners can help to improve hunting opportunities for everyone. One way to improve hunting opportunities is to help stop poaching which can be done by providing accurate and timely information to the PGC Regional Office (570-675-1143) about illegal hunting (poaching). Officer Webb detailed that there had been a considerable amount of illegal hunting done in the western part of Susquehanna County. Officer Webb said that during the fall hunting season he often works 80 to 100 hours per week of which much is focused on reported illegal shooting and hunting.

PGC Food and Cover Corps Foremen Chuck Wiseman and Darren Pettyjohn both spoke of their crews' activities on the local State Game Lands (SGL) 35, 140, 219, 236 in Susquehanna and Bradford Counties. The PGC Food and Cover Corps is a little known part of the Game Commission whose efforts are focused on habitat improvement projects on the more than 1.4 million acres of SGL. The PGC network of SGL is critical to ensuring that wildlife will always have access to the three habitat components it needs to survive: food, shelter and water. Both Foremen Wiseman and Pettyjohn spoke about their crews' work such as preparing and planting food plots and mowing herbaceous openings, mowing grass and legume areas several times from spring through fall, spraying herbicides to control noxious weeds and undesirable species control along roadways, impoundments, fields and forest understory. Also mowing many herbaceous openings to maintain certain habitat conditions and control unwanted vegetation encroachment. Food and Cover Corps crews do necessary SGL road repairs such as grading, ditching and culvert maintenance to try and keep water off the roadways and maintain passable access to the SGLs.

Foreman Wiseman also spoke about the use of prescribed fires this past spring on SGL 35. "The prescribed fires (burning) were conducted successfully on 54 acres of SGL 35 in Susquehanna County to promote oak regeneration. (SGL 35 covers an area of 7000+ acres on the east side of Interstate 81 between Hallstead and New Milford.)

Foreman Pettyjohn also told the group, "Each and every SGL is different and the management needs are different. Different terrain, soils, acreage, forest types, amounts of water, wildlife management opportunities. There is no one-size-fits-all management plan."

The Susquehanna Branch QDMA has worked with the PGC to provide both financial help and on-the-ground resources by planting grasses and legumes, planting annual crops such as Buck Forage Oats, corn, sorghum, brassicas and soybeans, liming and fertilizing, mowing planted food plot areas, and mast tree release cuttings on SGL 35, 140 (near Friendsville) and 219 (northeastern Bradford County). The Branch has also provided educational materials to the PGC Regional Office during the past year. According to Branch Vice President Mike Koneski, "The Susquehanna Branch plans to meet this winter with SGL Land Manager Rich Lupinsky and Food and Cover Corps Foreman to devise a strategy to better assist the habitat improvement efforts on SGLs in our area."

Information on the QDMA can be found on the web at www.qdma.com and at the Branch's website susq-qdma.org (new website since October).



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Even without a final tally that will include donated deer from late archery and muzzleloader season, Jeff Scavazzo (our Susquehanna County Hunters Sharing the Harvest processor) informed me that he has turned in meat from over 40 deer so far. This equates to over 8,000 meals for needy Pennsylvanians.

Thank You,
Jim Holbert, Susq. County HSH Coordinator

Northeast Regional Coyote Hunt

\$2000 Grand Prize

January 31, February 1 & 2, 2014

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District 9, Pa. Trappers Assn.

\$2000 grand prize will be awarded to the hunter with the heaviest coyote. Also, a **\$250 daily prize** will be awarded to the heaviest coyote weighed in each day, and **\$100** will be awarded for all other coyotes turned in during the hunt.

Coyotes taken on the 3 days of the hunt in Bradford, Susquehanna, Wayne, Wyoming, Lackawanna, Pike, Luzerne and Sullivan Counties may be entered for weigh-in.

Coyotes may be taken by **HUNTING ONLY. NO TRAPPED OR CABLE-RESTRAINED COYOTES ALLOWED.** Pennsylvania Game Commission regulations must be strictly adhered to. Coyotes must be taken by fair chase / stalk methods. In case of a tie, the first coyote weighed in wins.

Weigh-in will be held at the Triton Hose Co., 116 West Tioga St., Tunkhannock, Pa. 18657, from 12:00 PM to 8:00 PM on Friday & Saturday, 9:00 AM to 2:00 PM on Sunday. **WEIGH-IN ENDS AT 2:00 PM SHARP ON SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 2.** A weigh-in dinner, included in the entry fee, will be held for all entrants on Sunday from 1:00 to 3:00 PM.

All members of a hunting party must be registered in the hunt. All coyotes entered become the property of the Hunt Committee. Hunter who makes the kill must present the coyote for registration. The Hunt Committee may not award prizes for 72 hours after the hunt ends to allow review of the animals and verification of rules compliance. An autopsy may be done on animals that the Hunt Committee deems suspicious. By paying the entry fee the hunter agrees that the decision of the Hunt Committee is final. Any infractions will result in immediate disqualification of the hunter(s) involved, and all prize monies and entry fees will be forfeited.

\$25 early entry fee (due by January 20) will cover the 3 days of the hunt **plus weigh-in dinner** from 1:00 to 3:00 on Sunday. \$30 late registration fee is required after January 20. **Registrations will not be accepted after 10:00 PM, January 28.** Clip the registration below and send along with a check or money order made out to District 9, Pa. Trappers Assn. Mail to: Northeast Regional Coyote Hunt, 3833 Old Newburg Turnpike, Union Dale, Pa. 18470. For more info call: 570-942-6895 or 570-679-2318, or e-mail pricee0503@hotmail.com. - "coyote hunt information" in the heading of the e-mail.

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Address: _____

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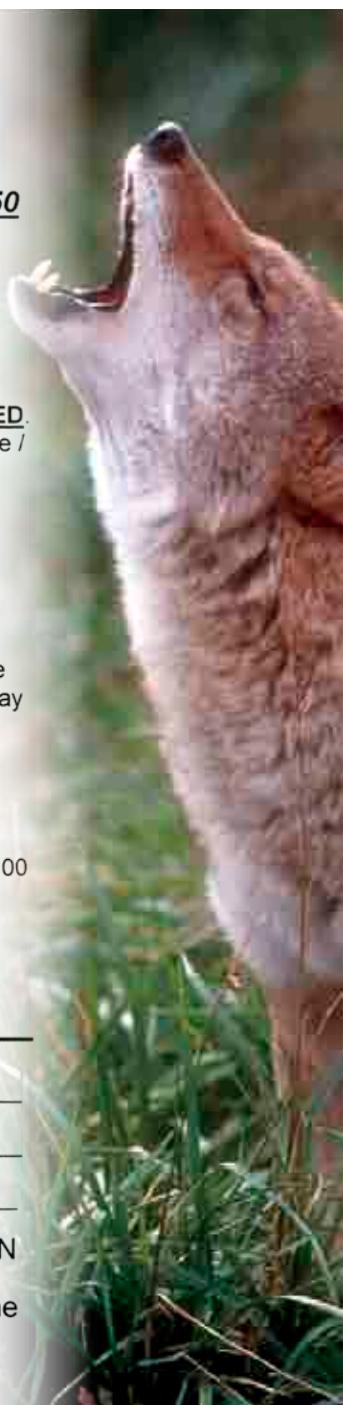
E-Mail : _____ Attending Buffet? (circle one) Y N

My signature below indicates I have read the rules and agree to abide by the decisions of the Hunt Committee

Signature: _____ Date: _____



The Pennsylvania Trappers Association District 9 Fur Sale will be held on February 8, 2014, at Triton Hose Company in Tunkhannock, PA. We will be charging a 4% commission on all fur sold. Make sure you bring your Furtakers license.



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First Day Bucks *by Colin Legg*

On the first day of deer season, my dad, brother and I were going to be in our new stand overlooking our food plot from a different direction than we ever had before. When we got to our stand, I was watching on my corner of the stand looking at different spots that I thought a deer might come to our plot. About 30 minutes of carefully looking, I spotted our first deer. At first I thought it was a doe through the trees, then it walked into an open spot and I saw it was a buck. Since I shot a big 8-point last year, I wasn't going to shoot unless it was at least an 8-point. When my dad helped me get the gun up, and I first saw the buck through the scope, I got really excited and whispered to dad that I was going to try to take it. Then I had to wait for it to walk into the next opening in the trees. The buck slowly kept walking towards our food plot and when I had a shot, I pulled the trigger. Dad said I hit him and I wanted to get out of the stand and see how big it was, but he said we had to wait for a little while. Finally, when we did get to my deer, I found out that it was actually a 9-point.

After a quick lunch we went back to our stand to give my brother a chance to fill his tag. We sat for a long time and it was an early morning, so I decided to take a nap. I woke up when I heard my dad whisper to Ethan, "There's a buck in the food plot." He quickly got set up and shot. All I knew was that he also got a buck, I was really surprised when we got to the buck and it was a 17" wide 8-point with two PA Game Commission tags in its ears!

I can't wait until next season to see if we can repeat our double buck first day!



FIRST DAY BUCKS: ON LEFT, COLIN LEGG (AGE 10), WITH A 9-PT BUCK AND 13-YEAR-OLD ETHAN LEGG WITH HIS 8-PT BUCK. BOTH BUCK WERE SHOT FROM THE SAME STAND OVERLOOKING OUR FOOD PLOT OF BUCK FORAGE OATS AT THE BAKER CAMP – ONE AT 7:30 AM AND THE OTHER AT 1 PM.


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"Ten Point"

By: Jey Rusek



We were walking to our archery stand up at our cabin on Saturday, November 9. My dad spotted something in the field as we were walking in. We walked up to it to see what it was. It was the carcass of a dead fawn chewed up by coyotes. My dad and I didn't think that we were going to see anything. We walked up to the archery stand and got set up. My dad asked me when I wanted him to rattle, I said 2:30. He said ok, and we sat and waited.

We didn't see anything yet, and it was 2:30 now. My dad let out two doe bleats and started to rattle. "Look," my dad said. "There's a deer in the woods over there." I looked and saw it; neither me nor my dad could tell what the deer was. I said, "I think it's a buck." My dad said, "I think you're right." Then the deer went over to a tree and started rubbing its antlers on it and we could tell that it was a buck. It stopped rubbing and started walking down to a clearing; it was a monster – the rack was huge! The buck put its nose in the air and started trying to sniff a doe. It couldn't smell anything, so it walked a little closer. I picked up my crossbow just in case it came into range. The buck still stayed in the woods. Then the buck turned around and went back onto the other side of the field, then it went down the other side of the hill and we never saw it again that day. We did see a couple of doe after that though. One doe actually came out in the field that the dead fawn was in and started to snort at it.

Thursday, November 14

I didn't have school that day so my dad said that we would go hunting. We were walking into the same archery stand that we were in on Saturday, November 9. It was 1:00 pm when we got to the stand and there was a light cover of snow on the ground. My dad had bought some doe pee and we put up a few wicks and made a scrape with the rest on the edge of the field and in front of our stand. Now it was 1:35 and we still didn't see anything. Out of the corner of my eye I saw that the burlap that we had wrapped around our archery stand was blowing in the wind, so I turned my head to grab it and tuck it back in, but when I picked my head up, I saw a deer walking through the woods. "Look," I said, "a deer." My dad looked over and said, "I don't see it." "I'm not sure, but I think it's a buck," I said. The deer came out into a clearing and I knew it was a least a 6-pointer. I said, "Yep, it's a buck," and I picked up the crossbow. The deer kept walking in and was on the other side of the field about 20 yards in the woods. Then my dad let out some doe bleats, the buck started to slow down, it stopped and made a scrape. Then he started sniffing in the air for a doe. I looked through the scope at him and I could tell he was big. Then he smelled the doe pee and started to walk into the field; he was heading straight for us. My dad said, "He's 43 yards away," the buck kept walking. "40 yards," my dad said. My dad made a grunt, the buck stopped dead in his tracks, I shot. The buck sprinted about 70 yards and fell over, we saw its head for a while then we couldn't see anything. My dad and I waited 20 minutes and then got out of the stand. We found the arrow drenched in blood sticking out of the ground. Then we followed the blood trail in the snow, we tracked it across the field and into the woods and found the buck lying on the ground. We counted the points and it had ten. My dad and I took some pictures, then I went to get the four wheeler and my dad dragged the buck down to the path. When I came back with the four wheeler, we tried to put it on the back rack to bring back to the cabin to gut, but it was too heavy, so we gutted it in the woods. I shot through both of his lungs.

Later that week we took the buck's lower jaw bone to a QDMA meeting and Rusty Ely, one of the QDMA directors, aged the buck at 3-1/2 years old. This is the biggest and oldest buck I've harvested!



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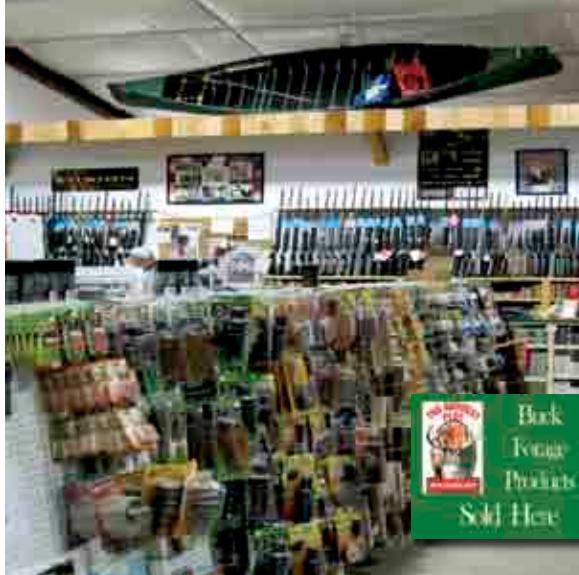
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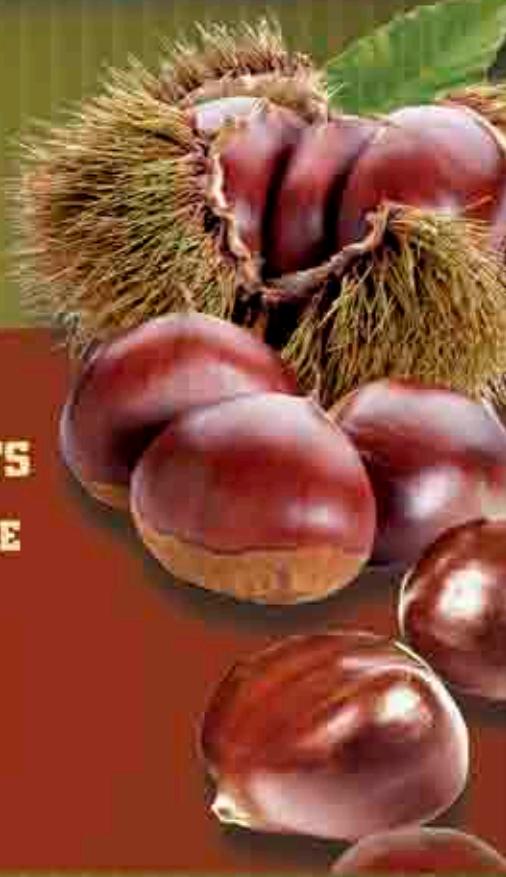
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The Silent Mountains – Kind of a Commentary *by Jim Holbert*

While hunting the ridge by my home in Northeastern PA, the first day of rifle season, I realized that this year (2013) was the 50th anniversary of me being on these mountains. I'm sure, like a lot of hunters, the time in the woods is a time to reflect and remember deer seasons of the past. I know how time also has a way of distorting memories when we hear things like "When I was a kid it was nothing to see 60-80 deer the first day and to hear 200 shots before noon."

I did seem to see more deer in the late 60s and 70s and I also remember all of the active dairy farms in Susquehanna County.

I remember classmates active in Future Farmers of America and I remember the family-owned farm not only producing milk but providing a huge food source for the whitetail deer. Corn, clover, and alfalfa were all planted for the dairy industry and all benefiting wildlife. Sadly, only a handful of active dairy farms exist in our area and it's still one of those memories and reflections of seeing 50 deer in one farmer's alfalfa field while spotlighting.

As I sat on the ridge this year, I couldn't believe how absolutely quiet it was. And please don't tell me I need a hearing aid. Jimmy at Miracle Ear has taken care of that. Only a few shots were fired and by noon I counted less than 20 shots. It was hard to believe that there was so little activity. With the silence on the mountain I began to think of other sounds that were now lost to me and how I have to admit that it was sounds that in yesteryear made my adrenaline flow.

I have read of sounds that have been lost to time. Some of these that come to mind are the blood chilling battle cry of the confederate soldier during the Civil

War. I've read accounts of actual Civil War vets trying to describe this rebel yell but of course there's no recording so it's a sound lost to history. Another



sound lost I've read about is the thundering pounding of the American bison as herds that covered the prairie as far as the eye could see stampeded and shook the earth.

The thing I suddenly and sadly reminisced about on my stand was the sound of the organized deer drives. In my teenage years there were three or four large gangs that drove deer in our area. Standers and drivers, all composed of hunting camps, farm families, and friends covered the mountain. To be part of an organized drive was crazy fun and took unbelievable stamina. Our ridges are steep and long and a long drag was required for any successful hunter. Remember, no quads, no ATVs, only ropes, strong backs, and weak minds. When deer were shot on some of those drives, we always questioned our sanity after dragging them out.

The ridges would ring out with voices yelling and whooping as a deer drive started. You could sometimes hear the drive from miles away. Standers were strategically placed where the gang knew the deer would cross when

pushed. On a typical drive there could be ten standers and ten or more drivers. Many times you could hear shots from the drivers early into the drive because a smart buck very often would cut back between them. It normally didn't take long for shooting to start and that shooting would always stir the adrenaline of the drivers. You could hear the volume and excitement increase.

When the drive was over and the hunt over (we could say when the smoke cleared) and the drivers approached the standers it was always "story time." Did ya get him? How big? You missed! We walked two miles so you could empty your gun! Excuses meant shirt tails cut off and lots of time deer to drag. This was camaraderie at its finest and simply a lot of fun.

But the sound of the drive in my neck of the woods is over. Like the rebel war cry, it's a sound lost to history. Several things are responsible for the demise of the drive. In our area, land that was available to hunt years ago has been cut up and sold in smaller parcels. You just can't hunt the ridges like yesteryear because of private property. Respecting property is paramount and if you're not supposed to be on it, stay off. We also have a longer season in PA, which includes archery and crossbow. Many hunters opt for this and muzzle loading season to fill their tags their own way in a beautiful time of year. I also think that with many of us "baby boomer hunters," we're simply getting old and as realistic hunters we know we can't do what we used to. Hunting has had a cultural change and it's here to stay.

I ask myself about the change and even though I miss the camaraderie and the sound of the drive, I have to remember a conversation that I had with Dr. James Kroll several years ago when we were



OVERVIEW OF BIRCHARDVILLE, PA

discussing hunting in PA and Dr. Gary Alt. Dr. Kroll, as I remember, said something like this: "I know how you Pennsylvania Ridge Runners used to hunt. You get a gang of 20 plus guys and drive the daylights out of those poor deer. It was probably lots of fun but if you cared at all about the animals, just think about what you were doing."

"First of all, in your area, you probably had a doe to buck ratio of 12:1, and with that being the case, you know that one buck will do his utmost to breed every one of the doe. So, after Mr. Buck has had a go of spreading his wild oats, your rifle season will begin. That buck who has tried to breed every lady deer he could find is, without a doubt, more than a little run-down physically. Now he has to survive the gauntlet of drives and flying lead. If he survives the hunt, his next challenge to see Spring is to find

enough nutrition to make it through the roughest conditions of the long winter." Dr. Kroll's reasoning was very valued and I observed the culture change in our hunting practices in PA. All these years ago, I never heard of food plots, tending creatures' habitat, replanting American chestnut trees, or having a doe-to-buck ratio that was reasonable. But on the flip side, I never would have believed that hunters in my county could harvest buck that weighed over 225 pounds and scored 150.

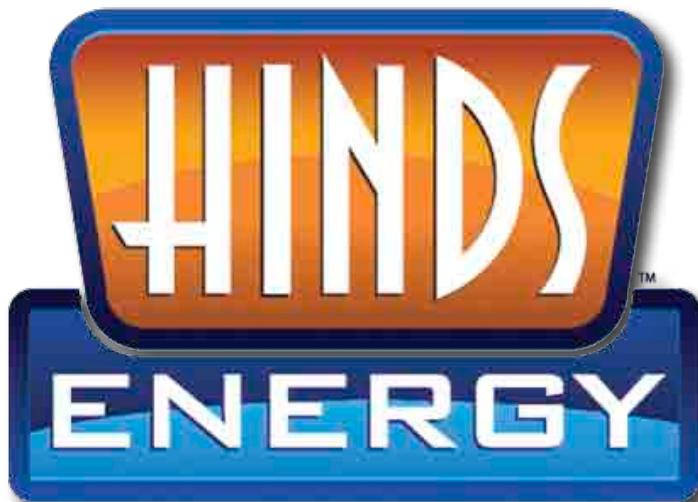
I'm still going to reminisce about all those old sounds of the drive when I'm hunting on the ridge and I know there will be times I can't keep from laughing out loud as I think of all the past hunts. I'll even remember things like the all-night card games at the deer camp when my wife's fears of marrying a fool were realized. I'll remember the

guys who are no longer with us – their antics and stories.

Without a doubt, hunting has changed in 50 years and the question is: "Can I deal with it?" I think I can. There's always going to be change. Gas lines are going over ridges where you would have never expected them. Well sites are plopped down and mountains literally moved in today's natural gas exploration. Hopefully, the construction of these sites can be a positive for our wildlife and hunting opportunities.

As far as the changes, we have to deal with it and realize the only constant and infinite thing we have is God. I hope He allows me to enjoy His creatures and creation a few more seasons. The first 50 went by way too fast.



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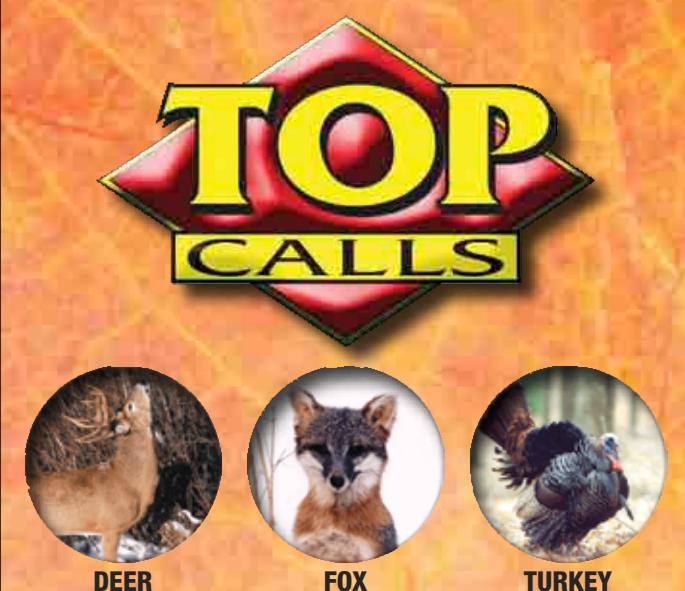
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Saving Old Apple Trees or How to Have Deer Marching to Your Property



by Robert Fearnley,
Watershed Specialist,
Susquehanna County Conservation District

Everyone gets excited about putting food plots in the ground and planting fruit and nut trees for wildlife. It gives a lot of immediate satisfaction; they just look so good planted. The field greens up within weeks and the trees bud out soon after planting and start growing leaves. However, there are some drawbacks. Some food plots are annuals and need to be planted every year; even the perennial food plots may require expensive inputs and perennial does *not* mean forever. A good legume stand lifetime is seldom more than five years. Before those seedling trees will produce fruit or nuts, 5-30 years will pass.

What if I were to tell you how to produce a food irresistible to deer and most wildlife at a very low cost within three years and almost every year for a lifetime? That food is of course the apple. Although it is not native to northeast Pennsylvania, it is one of the most common trees in the area. Almost any property has a few or many apple trees on it. However many of these trees are in dire need of help. Fortunately, winter is the perfect time to help these old apple trees. Whether it is an old farm orchard or a few scrub apples in the middle of a wood lot, a few simple steps should increase not only the quantity but also the quality of the fruit produced on those trees. Don't get too worried about quality of the apples; deer as a whole are not very persnickety consumers. A one inch, knotty apple seems to be relished as much as a grocery store quality Honeycrisp. That wild apple is as valuable to the wildlife manager as the latest variety released by a university.

Apple trees are full sun lovers. They commonly spring up in pastures and old fields from seeds spread by cows, deer and other wildlife. The last few years have been tough for the seedlings to get growing due to browse damage by deer; so most apple trees are 30- to over 100-years-old. Many of these trees are in fields abandoned in the 1940s to the 1960s and due to forest succession find themselves in young forests. As apple trees are seldom over 25 feet tall, they are easily overtapped by other hardwood species. Lack of sunlight is probably the number one killer of mature apple trees. So the first thing to help renew that old apple tree is to make sure it has plenty of sunlight. Cut all trees that shade the apple tree. If you wish, you may hinge-cut these trees to provide browse for several years before any limbs get tall enough to again shade the apple tree.

Once the tree is in the open, it is time to prune. Don't let that word strike fear into your heart! Pruning is a natural process that has been done by man and nature for thousands of years; unless you prune down to ground level, the tree will survive. That being said, don't remove more than one third of living tree per year. The purpose of pruning is to open up the crown of the tree; to allow sunlight to get to all the leaves and fruit and allow air to circulate through the crown to quickly dry the leaves and fruit after rain or dew. Sunlight is the fuel that powers fruit production and dry leaves help prevent fungal diseases such as apple scab. In an orchard or home garden

setting, proper pruning increases fruit size and keeps tree size under control for spraying and fruit picking, neither of which is of great importance to the wildlife manager. Most wildlife trees are not sprayed nor harvested by man. However, a shorter tree is easier to prune in the future.

The first step of pruning is to cull out all dead wood back to live wood. On some trees this means a pick-up load, on others just a few branches. Deadwood is important to remove as it provides a means for rot and insects to enter the heart of the tree. Most cuts properly made will heal over in a few years. All cuts should be made $\frac{1}{4}$ inch from the outer edge of a branch collar. A branch collar is a ridge of bark encircling a branch next to the limb from which the branch sprouted. These collars contain specialized growth cells to quickly heal the wound. On larger branches, cut first upwards on the limb about a third of the way through, about a foot from where the finish cut will be. Then cut from the top down, dropping the branch. This prevents the bark from tearing back into wood you wish to save; next cut off the stub at the branch collar.

Continuing, cut out branches that are broken or cross one another; both are avenues for insects and rot to enter the tree. Any narrow vertical crotch is a weak point that can split with heavy loads of fruit or ice. Remove one side at the crotch or both limbs back to a lower branch junction. Any attempt to head back the tree should be to a strong horizontal branch. Remember this is a multiple-year project so don't get carried away the first year. Any mistakes or branches not pruned but that should have, can be done next year. One word of warning, most trees that have been neglected after pruning will put out numerous "water sprouts" or vertical whips growing out of the trunk and main branches. These can be taken off either in the summer or next winter. If you wish to try your hand at grafting, these make great scion material. Continue this process for three years and you should have your apple tree in peak shape for production. After this intensive care, you can relax your management somewhat in the future, just pruning enough to keep the tree open and removing dead or injured branches.

Fertilization should be limited the first year of renovation as the tree will put out excessive new growth; however, lime may be applied. If you do not have a soil test, 10-15 pounds spread around the tree to out past the drip line is a good rule of thumb. After the first year, a quart or two of 10-10-10 can be spread in a wide circle around the tree. Lime is of more importance to your tree than the fertilizer.

Apple tree management may not be as trendy as food plots, but it costs less and you can work on it during a slow time of year. So get out and look over your apple trees; with a little bit of time and even less in materials, you will have a natural food source that will attract deer and other wildlife for years to come.

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North Mountain Branch Enters 2nd Decade of Harvest Data Collection

Since 2003 the North Mountain Branch has conducted a volunteer deer check station for local hunters on the opening day of Pennsylvania's rifle season. In cooperation with the Suburban News newspaper who photographs every deer brought in for their special buck season issue and also allows hunters to be entered in a contest for the largest buck for prizes.

Deer that come to the check station are weighed, aged and antlers measured for beam length, beam circumference, antler width and number of points. During the day the branch also helps promote proper deer management techniques and instructs interested hunters on how to properly age and measure their deer.

In addition to the many prizes provided through the Suburban News by various local businesses, the North Mountain Branch also provided memberships and ball caps to hunters that brought in the largest racked buck as well as the buck that weighed the most. We added the heaviest weight award because we wanted to promote all aspects of deer management and not just a focus on antlers. We would have had an award for heaviest doe as well but now antlerless deer were off limits during the first day so we were not able to add that category.

Over the years we have been able to begin to start to track certain trends with deer in relation to that year's conditions. In 2011 conditions were warm which resulted in a reduced deer harvest for the day but the branch still checked 52 bucks. In 2012 conditions improved and the check station checked 67 deer and warm weather again dropped our check station numbers back to 47 deer, which puts the total deer checked at nearly 500 deer since the program began.

Also, prior to the check station in 2011 it was forecasted that deer weights would be down approximately 10 percent due to the lack of mast crops and the failure of some agricultural crops due to an extremely wet season that also created substantial flooding in the area. Upon completion of the check station the results concluded that weights were down for the age classes between 1.5, 2.5 and 4.5 years olds by 9%, 8% and 4% respectively. Antler dimensions were also down but at an almost insignificant level which is likely due to the fact that the much of the year's antler development comes from the buck's nutritional intake from the year before as most already know. In 2012 it was predicted that weights would remain relatively the same as 2011 and it seemed to hold true as can be seen on the chart. In 2013 it was expected that antler measurements would remain relatively the same and weights would be slightly lower due to mast crop failures in many areas.

The branch is also working on putting together the statistics dealing body and antler sizes and how warm season rainfall affects them. While the relationship between rain and herd health has been well documented in southern states such

as Texas, the North Mountain Branch wanted to see how much the phenomenon in Texas mirrored in Pennsylvania and during the first few years the data seems to reflect a strong correlation between them. Once the rest of the data is complete the branch will report the statistics.

This study isn't exactly scientific as there are certain complications to the collection of the data. Such problems are that the sample of deer taken is relatively small and taken from such a broad area. For example, if a particular age class has only three recorded, that extremely small sample can greatly influence the average and can skew the results to either end of the scale.

Another problem is that since the major attraction for hunters to bring their deer to the check station is to have their picture taken for the newspaper than perhaps a greater sample of the bucks are larger while many hunters shooting smaller bucks may not be as willing to bring their bucks to the station.

However, we do get a relative steady sample of bucks from all age classes and as can be seen in the charts that the yearly samples are relatively close each year and have only slight variations in measurements. The greatest fluctuations occurred with the number of harvested bucks by age classes.

With the inception of antler restrictions in 2003 it was destined that these percentages would change drastically in the coming years and can be seen in that the number of 1.5 year old bucks harvested dropped by half and the increase of older age class bucks harvested jumped by 3-4 times the amount from the beginning year.

This year's check station volunteers included branch President Chris Denmon, Vice President Steve Germick and Board Directors Joe Germick and Randy Storrs.

For more information on how to become more involved with the North Mountain Branch of the Quality Deer Management Association you can do so by calling 477-2238 or emailing cddeers72@frontier.com.

Continued on page 30



10 YEAR HARVEST DATA COLLECTION

Age	BEAM LENGTH										
	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
1.5	8-6/8"	8"	10-6/8"	10-5/8"	10"	11-1/8"	10-2/8"	10"	9-6/8"	10-4/8"	8-7/8"
2.5	16-2/8"	13"	15-2/8"	15-7/8"	14"	15-4/8"	14-1/8"	14-7/8"	13-2/8"	12-6/8"	14-2/8"
3.5	19-1/8"	16"	19"	18-3/8"	19-4/8"	18-7/8"	17-1/8"	18-4/8"	17-7/8"	17-4/8"	18-1/8"
4.5	N/A	19"	20-1/8"	19-4/8"	21"	19-3/8"	20-3/8"	20"	19-5/8"	19-6/8"	19-3/8"
5.5	23-2/8	18-2/8"	20-4/8"	21-5/8"	N/A	22-1/8"	21-5/8"	20-6/8"	21-3/8"	21-6/8"	21-4/8"
Age	ANTLER SPREAD										
	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
1.5	7.8"	7"	8"	9"	7-4/8"	8-6/8"	9-2/8"	8-5/8"	8"	9"	7-7/8"
2.5	12.8"	11"	13.7"	13-2/8"	13"	12-6/8"	12-5/8"	12-7/8"	11-7/8"	11-3/8"	13"
3.5	15.2"	15"	15.8"	15-1/8"	15"	15"	15-3/8"	15-7/8"	15"	14-6/8"	15"
4.5	N/A	17"	16.6"	17-6/8"	17-4/8"	15-6/8"	16-5/8"	17-1/8"	16-3/8"	17-2/8"	15-4/8"
5.5	18.3"	17.5"	18"	17-4/8"	N/A	15"	17-1/8"	16"	18-4/8"	17-6/8"	17-6/8"
Age	BEAM CIRCUMFERENCE										
	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
1.5	2-3/8"	2-6/8"	2-2/8"	2-5/8"	3"	2-5/8"	2-6/8"	2-5/8"	2-4/8"	2-3/8"	2-4/8"
2.5	3-4/8"	3-4/8"	3-2/8"	3-1/8"	3"	3-2/8"	3-1/8"	3-1/8"	3-1/8"	2-7/8"	3"
3.5	4-1/8"	4"	4-1/8"	4-1/8"	4-2/8"	4"	3-5/8"	3-6/8"	3-7/8"	3-5/8"	3-6/8"
4.5	N/A	5"	4-4/8"	4-1/8"	5-4/8"	4"	4-2/8"	4-1/8"	4-3/8"	4-4/8"	4"
5.5	5"	5-4/8"	4-6/8"	4-5/8"	N/A	4-7/8"	4-2/8"	4-3/8"	4-4/8"	4-5/8"	4-5/8"
CHECK STATION DATA OVER LAST DECADE											
BODY WEIGHTS (DRESSED)											
Age	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
0.6	65	70	55	70	----	59	N/A	60	N/A	N/A	N/A
1.5	107	102	99	112	100	98	104	106	97	99	97
2.5	133	127	118	122	124	134	113	124	117	112	110
3.5	138	141	139	139	146	146	132	130	137	134	131
4.5	N/A	151	141	140	155	140	147	148	145	145	145
5.5	146.5	142.5	168	141	----	137	154	137	158	150	138
6.5	180	115	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----
9.5	-----	120	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----
PERCENT OF BUCKS RECORDED BY AGE CLASS (1.5 & UP)											
Age	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
1.5	29%	11%	19%	17%	17%	21%	18%	17%	15%	14%	15%
2.5	42%	33%	39%	37%	28%	31%	21%	30%	29%	25%	23%
3.5	22%	36%	25%	37%	44%	27%	27%	33%	34%	34%	34%
4.5	3%	16%	11%	2%	11%	12%	18%	10%	12%	14%	13%
5.5+	5%	3%	6%	6%	N/A	9%	15%	8%	10%	13%	15%

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What the Heck is a "Cull Buck?"

By Jim Stickles, Associate Wildlife Biologist®

As a hunter and deer biologist, I spend a lot of time talking with other hunters. Often, deer myths or misconceptions will pop up in conversation, and I find myself biting my tongue or nodding in agreement for the sake of keeping a peaceful conversation. People hate being corrected, and unfortunately this was a lesson that I have had to learn the hard way on numerous occasions. However, when somebody says the words "cull buck," I involuntarily cringe, because more often than not, the person is not referring to a buck that would remotely qualify as a "cull buck."

Most hunters define a "cull buck" as a buck that has an antler deformity, an uneven rack, or just a small set of antlers in general. Do you see the problem with this type of definition? It is based on antlers' characteristics and not by age, so inevitably, hunters end up killing young deer and try to justify it by calling the buck a "cull." On average, a deer does not reach its full antler growth potential until it is about 5.5-6.5 years-old. So when a hunter kills a 1.5 or 2.5 year-old buck and calls it a "cull

buck," I take issue with that because the deer was never allowed to reach an age to be properly assessed by antler characteristics.

Just to be clear, I have no problem with hunters killing young deer, none at all. If a hunter wants to kill a yearling buck, then that is the hunter's choice and it does not need any justification whatsoever. Meat is meat, and not everybody has time to wait for a big buck, or even a doe for that matter. However, when a hunter tries to justify killing a young buck by calling it a "cull," then they have deprived themselves and others of an opportunity to harvest that animal at an older age when it would likely have bigger antlers and more meat. I would think that management-oriented hunters would prefer to save their buck tags for bigger and older bucks.

As far as antler deformities are concerned, there seems to be a common misconception that antler deformities are caused by genetics. However, most antler deformities have nothing to do with the genetics of the deer. Rather



they are most often caused by an injury to the skeletal system (usually the legs), an injury to the antler or pedicle during antler development, or an extensive injury to the pedicle. Further, deformities caused by injuries during development are usually only temporary, and the following year the buck may have a completely normal rack. Skeletal injuries may justify a "mercy kill" as these bucks often appear to be in pain or poor condition and often compete poorly with other deer for food and other resources.

Personally, the word "cull buck" does not fit in my vocabulary because my definition of a "cull buck" requires a deer to reach at least 4.5 years-old. At 4.5 years-old, bucks express up to 90% of their full antler growth potential, and at that age, does it matter what a buck is wearing on top of its head? For most hunters, a 4.5 year-old buck is considered a fine trophy regardless of its headgear. Therefore, I believe the term "cull buck" should be eliminated from the hunter vocabulary and replaced with a more appropriate term, like "trophy."



Figure 1. This is a 1.5 year-old buck that still has a lot of growing to do, but it seems that every year I see bucks like this killed with the hunter saying it was a "cull."



Figure 2. This deer developed a malformed after the antler pedicle was damaged when I captured it in May 2012 (left). During the summer of 2013, the same deer had a perfectly normal rack (right).



Figure 3. This buck had an injured hind leg (red arrow) that caused his right side antler to be deformed (yellow arrow).



Figure 4. Buck 29/30 was 5.5 years-old in this photo. He had smaller antlers than other deer in his age class and he had reached an age where nearly 100% of his antler development was expressed. This buck could legitimately be considered a "cull buck." However, I would rather consider this buck to be a trophy, wouldn't you?

Things to Know about Deer Genetics

By Jim Stickles, Associate Wildlife Biologist®

Some hunters argue that maintaining good genetics is a legitimate reason to kill small-antlered bucks. I suspect TV hunting shows have played a big role in making hunters believe that they can actually control or manipulate gene flow in a free ranging deer herd. However, in a free ranging deer herd, there is NOTHING a hunter can do to weed out "bad genetics." If anyone tells you otherwise, promptly ask them for a shovel because you are about to receive a huge dose of bull crap.

Here are a few things hunters need to know about deer genetics and gene flow:

- Half the genes for antler genetics come from the female. Since there is no way to tell which does have "bad antler genes," it is nearly impossible to eliminate all animals with "bad antler genetics" from a wild herd.
- Approximately 50-75% of whitetail bucks disperse from where they were born when they reach 1.0-1.5 years of age. The average dispersal distance is about 4 to 6 miles, but 20+ mile dispersals are not uncommon, and dispersals of 40+ miles have been recorded. In essence, this means that any efforts to manage genetics of a herd are futile because the bucks born on a property will likely move somewhere else, and the bucks that reside on a property were likely born several miles away.
- If a buck is 2.5 years of age or older, he has likely already sired fawns, so his genes may already be in the system.
- Research has shown that bucks raised in areas with inadequate nutrition may never reach the same antler growth potential as bucks raised in areas with excellent nutrition. In such cases, a lack of good nutrition is the reason a buck's antlers may be small for its age, not a lack of "good genetics." By giving deer good food, they may express their full potential. However, keep in mind that the bucks that reside on your property may have been raised on a property several miles away that did not have good food and they may have some "catching up" to do with regard to antler growth.

In summary, age, nutrition, and genetics dictate how big a buck's rack can grow. We can easily let deer age by not pulling the trigger on young bucks, and we can give deer sufficient food to grow to their full potential. However, we cannot control breeding activities and dispersal in a free ranging herd, meaning genetics is the factor that we have the least control over. Therefore, when managing a free ranging deer herd, genetics should be the last thing on anybody's mind.

The collage includes the following elements:

- A top-left image showing a group of deer in a forest setting.
- A top-center image of a deer standing in a doorway.
- A top-right logo for PSE 80 Years Experience Performance.
- A middle-left image of a trophy room filled with mounted deer heads.
- A middle-center image of a wall displaying numerous deer antlers.
- A middle-right logo for Mathews Archery.
- A bottom-left logo for Decker's Bows & More East Benton.
- A bottom-center red box containing yellow text: "BRING IN THIS AD FOR A FREE ROUND IN OUR INDOOR 3-D RANGE".
- A bottom-right green banner with text: "THE HARVEY PLAT", "Buck Forage Products Sold Here", and a small logo.
- Small images of deer heads mounted on walls throughout the collage.

PUNKIN

*By Jeff Williams, Owner & Developer of
Nutra Deer Products*

I just want to share a great little story with you about a deer my kids named "PUNKIN" (Round Rack) in 2011.

We first saw Punkin in Dec. 2011 at one of the properties where we use 20% Pro Antler feed and Antler Builder mineral for supplemental nutrition. From that point on we were able to get hundreds of pics of this deer as he grew up utilizing our feed and minerals. The thing about Punkin was... After he reached four years old (last year 2012) he would very rarely show up on the property during daylight hours. This tendency became even worse as a fully mature 5 yr. old buck. We didn't know if we would ever get a crack at him during daylight hours on this particular property.

Our first snowfall and very cold temps in Oklahoma hit during the recent firearms season. Cold and snow usually means lots of deer activity at attractant sites so we were waiting for Punkin to show up at several locations in the timber, but it was a no go. We actually waited for the first week and a half of firearms season and still no Punkin....

On Dec. 4th, my oldest son put out 20 lbs of corn and sprayed it down with our new Power Spray attractant. Haydn sprayed the attractant on all the trees and vegetation around the site knowing the strong smell of the spray in a new strategic location might just be the ticket. Haydn had reviewed the wind direction for the next days' forecast before setting the trap. That evening it got very cold with heavy snow falling, and as predicted, a strong wind was moving the smell of Power Spray directly into a heavy bedding area. Around 3:30 that afternoon we noticed many deer showing up at Haydn's new Power Spray site, and then it happened – Punkin showed up around 4:30 wanting his fair share.

My beautiful wife – that everyone loves to pieces! – made a great shot on her very first deer! She was able to harvest Punkin at 100 yards (in heavy timber I might add) with her new 308 Savage. A perfect high shoulder shot and he was down. The rest is history. The 3-year saga is now complete and Patricia has her first deer mount for her office!

I hope you enjoy the age and growth pics of Punkin from 2011 to date. Shown are pics of him as a 3-year-old in Dec. 2011, velvet pics of him in August 2012 when he was 4 yrs old and several 2013 pics as a fully mature 5-yr-old buck. Please keep in mind that the part of Oklahoma where Punkin was harvested does not have any agriculture or fertile soils. Proudly we can report Punkin's harvested weight is well above average and his antler mass is considerably heavier than the local deer herd. The Nutra Deer supplemental feed and mineral program continues to work wonders on our deer. We see very noticeable gains in our deer every year now at this property. These gains were very minor in the past. We have also done some serious doe management and added a small pond to this property which helps the management process. This small property in NE OK is never going to be Iowa, KS or IL, but Nutra Deer is making a noticeable difference in a wild deer herd that needs supplemental nutrition. Nutra Deer can really help unlock the full genetic potential of wild deer.

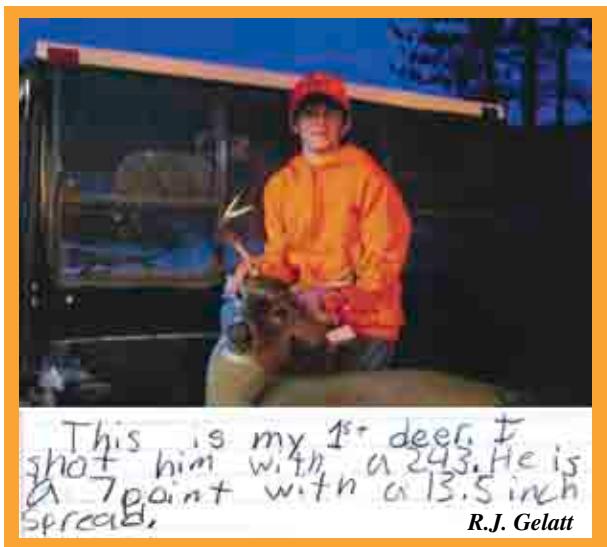
Hope you enjoy the story. We are all very proud of Patricia, Nutra Deer and this great white-tail buck.



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CANNED BEAR

This poor guy looks absolutely embarrassed after PA Game Officers remove an old milk can from his head.



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THANK YOU! ~JIM

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or events to share, email them to jholbert@epix.net**