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WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT *News*

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The Hoffman Family Orchard with a Passion for Whitetails

A Real Love/Hate Relationship

Mike Hoffman and his family faced a real dilemma this winter and early spring. The Hoffmans own and operate an apple and peach farm in Gardners, PA, which is just north of Gettysburg. This area of Adams County, PA, is famous for its sprawling orchards and rich farm land. I was told that there are somewhere near 28,000 acres of fruit trees planted in the region.

Mike's dilemma started when the severe winter conditions drove the deer herd to his newly-planted apple trees. With record snowfall and regular food sources depleted, the deer had no choice but to look at the young dwarf apple trees as their only source of nutrition. The number of damaged trees was in the thousands and several years of production were cut short.

I visited the Hoffman orchard twice and know how hard these folks have to work to keep us supplied with fresh apples and everything from apple sauce to Snapple; there is a Mott's apple processing plant in Gardners. I also know that Mike has a passion for the Whitetail deer. He and family members are avid hunters and they are very knowledgeable of deer behavior and what their habits are in the area. Mike probably had just cause to contact the



The Hoffmans – Ross (left) and Mike – giving us a tour of their deer-damaged orchard. Thousands of dwarf apple trees were browsed by hungry deer.

PA game commission and make arrangements for taking out a large number of deer for crop damage. He also understood that in normal conditions, the deer were more dispersed and food sources more abundant.

The Hoffmans decided to investigate the possibilities of fencing in a 70-acre orchard. Cooperative Feed salesman Jim Kuntz and Eric Blackstone of Gettysburg Agway put together several options to see what could be done to protect these trees in a cost-effective way. Jim was aware of a new electric

fence system that he observed being tested at Dr. James Kroll's research center in Nacogdoches, Texas. When this solar power fence was compared to a permanent high wire fence, the electric fence was a small fraction of the price. The million dollar question, however, was: "Will it work?"

I have played a very small role in testing the Dr. Kroll fence system and have seen wonderful results in keeping troublesome deer out of food plots. These fence kits are pre-packaged for everything a person needs for a half acre area. However, when I heard that someone wanted to do an area that was so large, I honestly didn't know what to think.

Mike decided to invest in the new fence system, and the wheels of progress were set in motion. A layout of the area was sent to Jake Butler of Buck Forage Products in Little Rock, AR, and he made a material list and shipped the fence system to Gettysburg.

When I was contacted by Jim Kuntz that the Hoffmans not only received the fence but that they planned on installing it the following week, I couldn't believe it. In my part of Pennsylvania, there was still snow on the ground and plenty of frost. The sense of urgency (I didn't realize) was that the sooner the

Continued on page 2

WMNews can be viewed at these sites:
www.buckforage.com
www.drdeer.com

Hoffman Family Orchard continued from page 1

fence was installed, the less browsing damage would occur to the young trees. I made arrangements to get to the orchard to take pictures and add what input I could.

Upon meeting Mike the very first time, I realized how much he loved Whitetail deer. He told me how he had to try something because the damage was tremendous. He also told me that he had been closely watching different products that had been developed by Dr. Kroll for decades. He wanted to try this electric fence system simply because it was cost-effective, made of quality material, and most importantly, developed and tested by Dr. James Kroll.

With a work force of three, the fence was installed in less than three days! Can you imagine the labor cost alone of a high wire fence enclosing 70 acres? At this point, the fence was installed, but like all custom jobs, some tweaking is always necessary for complete satisfaction. Corners sometimes have to be reinforced or a ditch may run under the fence and the possibility of deer crawling under has to be addressed. But all in all, the fence was up and I called Mike the following week to see how it was working.

He told me that even before it was completely electrified,

the deer knew something was up with the four strands of ribbon twine and would not go into the orchard. Once the fence was hooked up to the solar charger and battery, the deer avoided the fence completely.

My second trip to visit the orchard was when the apple and peach blossoms were erupting on the landscape. The pink and white blossoms were everywhere. After such a hard winter, it lets you know we are truly in God's hands.

Mike told me he was very pleased with the fence. He knew that other food sources were available to the deer, but his observation in years past was that if he went to the upper end of the orchard, the deer would bed in it and it would not be uncommon to kick out 20 deer. This spring, with the Dr. Deer fence, he had absolutely no deer in that area. I'm sure there will be some "renegade" deer getting in the area, but there is no way a few deer are going to damage several thousand trees in the future.

I have already made plans to visit the Hoffman Farm again in late summer to see how things are going. Most importantly, Mike and I are getting our granddaughters together to pick some apples and peaches.



Mike explains how deer-damaged limbs grow in an upward fashion. The limbs need to be spread out in a more perpendicular angle to the tree's trunk for the best productivity. (Check out Grow n Guide on page 33!)



This is the solar panel that energizes the complete electric fence. Over 70 acres of orchard are now protected from serious deer damage with the Dr. Deer system.



Mike points out how the deer nip the tender branches. Each branch has to be pruned several inches from the damaged area, which affects productivity for many years and is a very labor intensive job.

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Being a wildlife biologist, I - C.J. Winand - rarely give endorsements, but this product is different. Chestnut Magic is for real! Let's be honest... most products in the deer industry are nothing but advertising gimmicks. Chestnut Magic is different. And I'm not the only wildlife biologist who says this. Dr. James Krill says... Deer evolved eating chestnuts for thousands of years before the chestnut blight. They are evolutionarily programmed to eat chestnuts, and they seek out sweet, nutritious chestnuts over all other mast crops. Chestnuts have up to 2x the protein and 4x the carbs of acorns, with no bitter taste."



Buck Forage Clover

I don't know why anyone would want to look for a better clover than what Buck Forage has offered for years!

This is the third year of my established clover crop and I won't be surprised to see three more years of excellent results.





DR. DEER'S Management Calendar



by Dr. James Kroll

Summer Management Tips

Well, it is finally summer and one of the worst winters in history is now behind us. For many managers, the realization hit that last year was not exactly a banner year for deer herds. Winter-kill was high in many areas where herds already had been down due to hemorrhagic disease, aging habitats and increasing predator populations. It is time now to work on getting your deer into next fall and winter in condition to deal with whatever is thrown at them! So, here are some tips to consider.

Summer Plantings

For many of you, it still is not too late to plant summer crops for your deer, provided you do it right and plant the right varieties. In the north, we recommend planting soybeans and corn together, preferably with electric fences around them. Remember, the purpose of doing it this way is twofold. First, it will keep your deer from eating your crop before it reaches a point where it can defend itself by growing faster than they can eat it. Second, it will allow you to bank food you can let them have either early in fall or after the rut to aid recovery for bucks. There are a lot of folks favoring Round-Up™ Ready varieties, but I do not feel it always is necessary to go to this much expense. We prefer to analyze our food plots to see if weeds are of the volume and type necessitating use of herbicides. As with planting, it is what we call “decision-based” food plot management. This includes planting conditions, as well as weed control. Prior to planting, I suggest you monitor soil moisture to assure there is enough to get your crops up and going. And, as I noted above, later on determine if weeds are truly a problem.

If you already have an electric fence, summer is a time to monitor the wires to assure vegetation has not become so rank that it is pulling the wires to the ground or you are losing the visual effect of the fence. This is a time to spray your fences with herbicide. I prefer the RoundUp™ QuivkPro, as it contains not only glyphosate (73.3%), but also diquat dibromide (2.9%) which tends to kill more quickly than glyphosate. I use 1.5 ounces per gallon in a backpack sprayer. [Be sure to turn off your fence prior to use so that you do not have a very unpleasant experience!]

There are many things that cause crop failure or reduced success for food plots, but there are two that always arise. First, you fail to prepare to plant your crop. This includes a spring soil test for pH and critical nutrients such as nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium; plus micronutrients such as boron, sulfur and manganese. ALWAYS apply the full recommendation of the soil laboratory, even if it means get-

ting a custom-mixed fertilizer. Next, once the plot is up and growing, most managers just check on growth periodically. You have to build into your food plot management program what we refer to as “intermediate treatments.” As noted earlier, this includes possible herbicide control of heavy weed infestations; yet, the proper herbicide is critical. We learned by accident that lighter applications of glyphosate to second year or older clover and chicory plots does not kill these plants, only the weeds. They may stunt for a short time, but usually recover. Sixteen to 22 ounces of 41% glyphosate (WITHOUT diquat) per acre generally works on two-year old clover and chicory. If your weed problem is mostly grass, we use 12 ounces per acre of Fusilade™, which kills only grass and is a safe product in crops.

Another intermediate treatment, often as effective as herbicide, is mechanical mowing to knock the top off weeds that have grown above your crop. We tend to use this for weeds that have not reached the stage requiring herbicides. Finally, we also apply a second application of fertilizer at mid-season to boost growth. Remember, if your crop is only legumes, NEVER apply nitrogen prior to establishment or after growth begins. This only encourages weeds!

One intermediate treatment that has gone virtually unknown relates to your natural browse and forb plants. We maintain fertilized openings and roadsides for natural forage production. I suggest you begin at spring green up with an application of 200 lbs. per acre of a balanced fertilizer such as 13-13-13; then apply 100 lbs. per acre of ammonium nitrate/urea each month until the end of the growing season. Of course, some states have become so restrictive on fertilizer use, you should check first to make sure this is legal. Blackberries, raspberries, briars, grapes and other low-growing shrubs and vines make great deer food and respond well to fertilization.

Data Collection

The most important (yet boring) aspect of deer management is record-keeping. Without records, you cannot assess progress in your management program. Summer is a good time to review your records on each food plot to determine whether what you are doing in that plot is working. Every plot is unique and has to have a unique prescription for management. Take forage samples and have a laboratory analyze them for protein, digestible energy and phosphorus – the most critical components of deer forage.

About 10-12 days after fawning, does begin to move about with their youngsters. That is yet another time when trail cameras can give you a lot of critical information. Or, you can simply write down every deer you see on your property, as bucks, does and fawns. Either way, after collecting these data all summer, add up the numbers of sightings for

each class and then determine your buck:doe and doe:fawn ratios. Trail camera photographs also give you the opportunity to assess age-specific antler growth, as well as an early idea of which bucks you may want to remove next season.

Take periodic walks through your woods, paying attention to availability and use of browse plants. This can tell you a great deal about the stocking level of deer on your property and assure you they are not negatively affecting mainstay plants. Recently, I have seen excessive use and even disappearance of critical browse plants in the midwest and northeast, indicating a serious problem.

Lastly, I establish permanently monumented acorn survey lines around properties. Later in summer, I walk each line and stop periodically to examine 10 limbs of randomly selected oaks to count the number of developing acorns. This will give you an acorn index that, over years, will allow you to predict what your fall crop will be. Since deer management is site specific, it provides a customized system for your property, rather than a biologist's opinion based on the broad landscape.

Ready for Fall?

All of the aforementioned lead to arriving at fall activities with the proper information to plan and carry out management activities for the cool season. Remember to obtain soil samples for your fall plot by the end of July, and set up delivery of important soil amendments. This gets you ahead of other managers who wait to the last minute. If you have divided your summer plots into those with electric fence enclosures and those with open access, you will need to decide which plots will be converted to cool season crops, which will be opened to allow deer to feed just prior to hunting season, and which will be kept closed for use later as recovery foods for bucks. I often split plots using rollers to retract wires to slowly strip graze over the summer, leaving the last section for the hunting season or winter foods.

Hopefully, I have given you some things to do and think about this summer. Remember, deer management is a 365-day activity and there is something to do every day of the year. Construct yourself a calendar, specifying windows of time, rather than specific dates to give yourself flexibility in getting the job done. We will talk about fall management next issue.



www.drdeer.com



Good pictures of a fairly weed-free Buck Forage clover and chicory plot. Note the beautiful soft edge of wild phlox.

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If you have a product that you would consider having tested at the Center by Dr. Kroll, email me at jholbert@epix.net.

Thanks, Jim

Dunstan Chestnut™ - The Most Useful Tree

Dunstan Chestnuts™ are the best tree for attracting deer for many reasons – deer prefer the sweet, nutritious chestnuts 100:1 over acorns, the high carbohydrate nuts provide important usable energy for deer during the critical rut season, the trees begin to bear in only 3-5 years compared to 10-20 years for oak trees, they produce nuts every year and don't skip crops like oaks, and they can be grown from Michigan to Florida and west to east Texas.

Not only are chestnuts the most important mast tree for wildlife for millions of years, but they have been one of the most useful trees for humans all over the world for thousands of years. Chestnut remains are found in prehistoric sites for humans in Europe, Asia and North America. Early inhabitants also found the high carbohydrate and high quality protein an important food staple, which could be stored throughout the winter months. Chestnuts can be dried and ground into flour, making it an important source of bread and nutrition throughout the hard long winters during the ice age. Many archeological digs have uncovered the remains of chestnuts in fire pits and campsites all over eastern North America.

Chestnut trees originated in Europe around the Black Sea and were spread by people to Greece and then westward. The Romans recognized the value of this tree and planted chestnuts all over their Empire as a source of food and wood. Today there are chestnuts as far north as Hadrian's Wall in England, built by the Romans to keep the Scottish Picts out of their territory to the south. The Romans spread chestnuts to Spain, France and Germany. It was only the introduction of the potato and maize from South America that made the chestnut less important as a source for carbohydrate. Chestnuts planted by Romans still exist today, with some trees 1,000 years old still surviving. Chestnuts were survival food for peasants, especially in the mountains where other crops could not be grown.

Chestnuts are still an important part of the culture and cuisine today all over Europe. All Saints Day (November 1st)

is celebrated by roasting chestnuts and drinking new wine in Italy, France, Spain and Portugal. Traditional chestnut dishes include chestnut soup, chestnut breads, pastas and pastries, chestnuts in many dishes and sweet desserts and candies.

The blight-resistant Dunstan Chestnuts are a profitable orchard crop. They begin to bear every year by year 3-5 after planting, and can produce up to 2,000 lbs of nuts per acre after only 12-15 years. Some trees can bear 100 lbs of nuts per tree! The nuts bring \$3-6.00/lb wholesale, making it a very profitable crop. Dunstan Chestnuts are the most widely planted chestnut in America.

Not only do chestnuts produce valuable food year after year, but the wood from chestnuts is highly rot-resistant due to the high amount of tannin in the wood (not the nuts). Chestnut wood is a beautiful brown color. It was used for all kinds of applications where rot-resistance is necessary, such as fence posts, vineyard trellises, bridge timbers, beams of houses, exterior siding, windows and doors, and much more. Trees are coppiced (cut back to the stump forcing vigorous regrowth of multiple shoots) on various rotation cycles from 2-3 years for posts to 30-70 years for saw timber. The wood contains such a high percent of tannin that it is used still today extensively in the tanning industry. Chestnut wood was so rot-resistant that you could stick a fence post in the ground for 50 years, dig it up and turn it over, and get 50 more years out of it.

Much of the original chestnut forest remains only as wood that was used in barns, houses and furniture. It is a rare commodity to find existing barns that have not been torn down to recycle the wood. As the American chestnut for-

ests died off from the blight, trees were cut down and many homes built in the 1920s and 30s in the northeastern U.S. have chestnut wood in them. In western North Carolina, bark from chestnut trees was used like shingles to side the houses and this style of building is particular to this area of the country. The American chestnut reached its largest size in the southern Appalachian mountains, where some trees grew 100' tall and over 8' in diameter!

What tree produces delicious food prized by cultures all over the world, produces up to a ton of nuts per acre in only 12-15 years, is a profitable orchard crop as well as the best tree for attracting deer and wildlife, grows into a timber tree with rot-resistant lumber that can be used indoors and out for everything from fence posts to beautiful trim wood, and is used for tanning? There is no other tree that has such diverse and valuable uses as the Chestnut!

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About Chestnut Hill Outdoors

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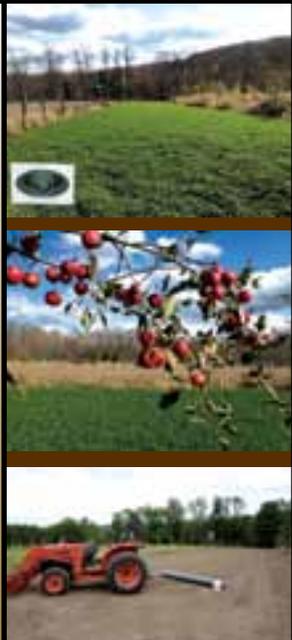
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As landowners, my wife Barbara and I have often talked about how or what we might do with our land to benefit others. The Hunts for Healing/Wounded Warrior program seems made-to-order for what we had in mind. This spring, we had the opportunity to host a couple of veterans for a spring gobbler hunt on our land. The hunts were organized through the local Hunts for Healing Chapter at Ringneck Ridge. Other than making our land available, there was minimal effort required on our part. The mentors/guides that accompany the hunters are all local residents who volunteer their time and talents to the local chapter. Everyone was very respectful of our property and very gracious in their appreciation. We are looking forward to hopefully hosting several more hunters this fall and winter and will spend some time this summer making several blinds and stands to accommodate whatever physical restrictions some of the veterans may require. Whenever we have mentioned our plans to friends and neighbors, they have all volunteered time and material to help and show their appreciation for our veterans.

If God has blessed you with a small part of his creation to steward for Him, there is no better way to share it than to host some of our veterans for a Hunts for Healing adventure. You'll be glad you did.

Chuck & Barb Stone



Above – Chuck Stone (left), Ken Bach and I did some early scouting for Hunts for Healing. We were very encouraged by all the birds we saw.



Above – Ken Bach, Russ Wagner of Top Calls and I got together to set up ground blinds and select sites for WNEP Channel 16's PA Outdoor Life, who televised the turkey hunt.

We had a whole lot of optimism about the sites we chose but these are not staged hunts. They are real hunts for real hunters and things don't always go as planned. We came up empty when the camera was rolling.



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

Clover & Chicory

from “Free for the Eating” by Bradford Angier

CLOVER

Everyone who – as a youngster – has sucked honey from the tiny tubular florets of its white, yellow, and reddish blossoms, or who has searched among its green beds for the elusive four-leaf combinations, knows the clover. Some 75 species of clover grow in this country, about 20 of them thriving in the east.

Clovers, which are avidly pollinated by bees, grow from an inch or so to two feet high in the fields, pastures, meadows, open woods, and along roadsides of the continent. Incidentally, when introduced into Australia, it failed to reproduce itself until bumblebees were also imported.

The stemmed foliage is usually composed of three small leaflets with toothed edges, although some of the western species boast as many as six or seven leaflets. This sweet-scented member of the pea family provides esteemed livestock forage. Red clover is Vermont’s state flower; white clover is all the more familiar for being grown in lawns. Quail are among the birds eating the small, hard seeds, while deer, mountain sheep, antelope, rabbit, and other animals browse on the plants.

Bread made from the seeds and dried blossoms of clover has the reputation of being very wholesome and nutritious and of sometimes being a mainstay in times of famine. Being so widely known and plentiful, clover is certainly a potential survival food that can be invaluable in an emergency.

The young leaves and flowers are good raw. Some Indians, eating them in quantity, used to dip these first in salted water. The young leaves and blossoms can also be successfully boiled, and they can be steamed as the Indians used to do before drying them for winter use.

If you’re steaming greens for four adults, melt four tablespoons of butter or margarine in a large, heavy fry pan over high heat. Stir in six loosely packed cups of greens and blossoms, along with six tablespoons of water. Cover, except when stirring periodically, and cook for several minutes until the clover is wilted. Salt, pepper, and eat.

The sweetish roots may also be appreciated on occasion, some people liking them best when they have been dipped in oil or meat drippings.

Clover tea is something you may very well enjoy. Gather the full-grown flowers at a time when they are dry. Then further dry them indoors at ordinary house temperatures, afterwards rubbing them into small particles and sealing them in bottles or jars to hold in the flavor. Use one teaspoon of these to each cup of boiling water, brewing either in a teapot or in individual cups, as you would oriental tea.

CHICORY

Chicory, millions of pounds of whose roots have been used as an adulterant and as a substitute for coffee, also provides greens for salads and for cooking whose excellence gives them prime positions on the vegetable counters of many local markets. Long popular in Europe, too, chicory is an escapee from that continent and from Asia. It now grows throughout most of the United States and across Canada from British Columbia to Nova Scotia.

Resembling the dandelion both in appearance and taste, it has, however, usually bright blue flowers which, except in cloudy weather when they may stay open all day, generally open only in the morning sunshine and shut by noon. These beautiful wheel-like blossoms, which sometimes spread like soft blue mist along roadsides and across grassy pastures and fields, also give the plant its other common name of blue sailor. It is also known as succor.

This rigid perennial with its angular branches grows from a long, deep taproot and reaches a height of from one to five feet. As in the familiar dandelion, the leaves nearly all grow at the bottom of the plant, starting underground and spreading in a rosette just above the surface. They are narrowly long and coarsely lobed or toothed. Smaller, clasping leaves ascend the stem. The flowers, which often grace the landscape from July to October, are occasionally whitish or pink and are made of at least two uneven ranks of strap-shaped petals whose ends are toothed. Chicory’s sap is bitter and milky. We use the basal chicory leaves just as we do those of the similar dandelion, although when gathering them in the early spring, we take pains to dig deeply enough to uncover the delicate white portions that grow underground directly from the deep root. You can also up-end paper bags over groups of plants and bleach the entire lengths of the leaves. Although only pleasantly bitter at first and hard to equal for salad, maturing and toughening chicory leaves all too soon become excessively bitter even when boiled in several changes of salted water. So get them well before they flower.

Much of the chicory root used in this country as a coffee substitute, stretch, and flavorer, is imported from Europe, but exactly the same thing grows right here at home. If you’d like to make your own, just dig some of the long roots, scrub them with a brush, and then roast them slowly in a partly open oven until they break crisply between the fingers, exposing a dark brown interior. Then grind and store in a closed container for brewing as a coffee substitute, in lesser amounts (as it’s stronger), or for blending with your regular supply of the bean.



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My First Turkey

by Luke Updyke, age 14

All of the waiting, all of the anxious thoughts and daydreams that had gone through my head about how this one day would turn out had finally ceased. That day was here. Finally. If you are a hunter yourself, you know that feeling.

I had set my alarm clock the night before to make sure I was up and ready to go, bright and early, somewhere around the 4:00 to 4:30 a.m. range. I was more than excited. I was ready. My friend who was picking me up to take me to our hunting location was coming at 5:00, so I had some time to get ready.

After about 25 to 30 minutes, I was all suited up and was as anxious as, well, I can't quite compare it to anything... nothing makes me as nervous and excited as hunting does. I threw on my worn out, muddy work boots from the farm a few days before. Then, finally, our friend Mr. Tompkins came up to the door and knocked excitedly as I opened the door.

"Are you ready?" he asked

"Why, yes I am!" I replied quickly.

And that was it; we were speeding off into the dark in the old 1999 stick-shift truck that doesn't look a day over a year old. The ride was relaxing, and I began planning everything out in my mind as the headlights lit up the darkness ahead of us. Mr. Tompkins and I talked about where turkeys might be roosting, and how things might go down. We arrived at the little bumpy path that stretched deep into the slowly lightening woods.

The truck slowed to a stop and I opened the heavy metal door. The cool morning breeze rushed into the cab, waking me fully. I got out, and we loaded the gun with some 3" 4-shot shells; I was using a super-full turkey choke. The gun was Mr. Tompkins', but I was using it because my shotgun didn't have a choke. We started the walk across the cornfield that had been cut last year, and then arrived at the hunting stand. I hadn't ever hunted in a turkey stand until I went hunting with Mr. Tompkins two hunting seasons ago. It was different, but I liked it. I slowly and quietly crept up the weathered wooden ladder, and up into the sturdy treestand. It was 5:45 a.m., and now it was just a waiting game.

We sat for about 15 minutes when two deer suddenly popped out into the clearing.

"It always seems like the deer come out during turkey season, and the tur-

keys come out in deer season. It's reversed!" I said quietly.

We both nodded in complete agreement.

Just then, a few hens flew out of their roosts, and into a field ahead of us. The hens were then followed up by the thing I had been dying to see: A beautiful, fanned-out gobbler came into view.

He was strutting his stuff and picking at the grass as we waited patiently for him to come closer to us for a good, clean shot. You know that feeling that you get when you are on a roller coaster going up a hill, then begin to quickly descend? I had that exact feeling right at that moment. The strutting gobbler began making his way towards us and Mr. Tompkins told me to slowly get the gun set up. The bird came into view and let his guard down.

"Shoot 'im!" Mr. Tompkins almost yelled.

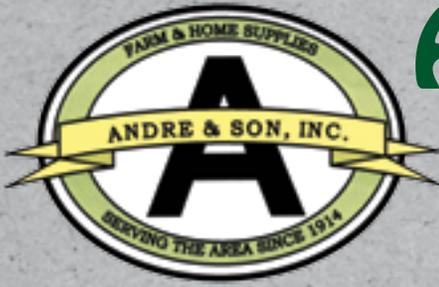
The turkey poked his head up for a split second, then, BOOM! He fell backwards and hit the ground instantly. The silence was broken by the sounds of disbelief coming from the both of us. We went down to retrieve the magnificent turkey, then tagged it and drove back home.

As we pulled into the driveway, I noticed no one came outside at first... then I realized it was only 6:30 a.m.!!

P.S. Mr. Tompkins, if you are reading this, thank you so much for helping me take my first bird!



Photos by Jerry Rusek



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Food Plots... It's Anybody's Game!!!

by Ray Reeves

In my business, I hear it all when it comes to food plots, and one thing I don't like to hear is... "I can't."

With the resources that are out there today, anything is possible. When it comes to whitetail and turkey hunting, I consider myself on the extreme side (at least my wife does); at any rate, when it comes to hunting them I like to give myself the edge, so food plots are how I do it. For the past 20+ years, I've done whatever it took to get plots established, from "weed-wack'n" and hand raking small hard-to-get-to places to hand mowing and walk-behind tillers. Thankfully for me, those days are gone and I've graduated to some "bigger stuff." I say this to prove a point and that point is: where there is a will there is definitely a way! Now I know that when folks think about food plots they envision tractors, plows, discs, drags and more with massive rows of corn and beans or possibly acres of clover or brassicas – and those are awesome dreams – but the reality for most is a garden tractor or a 4 wheeler and maybe a tiller attachment with only a couple of hours in an evening or even maybe a couple of days on the weekend to quickly try to make something or anything happen. I'm here to tell you that you can be very successful in those opportunities if you can add a couple more items to your small fleet.

About ten years ago I stopped plowing, discing, and dragging after I studied up on a few other items that cost less and saved me time, lots of time, which ultimately has allowed me to expand the amount of food plots that I now do today! Now let me be very clear, I'm sharing what I have learned over the years and any other way that folks do it is fine... especially if it works! However, there are certain principles that apply regardless of how you do it. Now before I share these key principles I want to let you know what's out there to help you accomplish these key principles. For those who use tractors and plows, there are 3pt hitch roto-tillers that effectively do in one pass what a set of plows, then discs, and then drags do in three separate hook-ups and then passes! Folks with garden tractors and/

or 4-wheelers... flip-over or adjustable discs and sprayers and cultipackers for either tractors or 4-wheelers.

There are certainly many more attachments available but these are the main items to getting the "job" done! So now let's look at the key principles to successful food plot building and how these items play their part. Principle number 1: always eliminate all competition. This is where plowing came in back in "the day" by taking that top vegetation (grass, weeds, etc..) and turning it 16" under; this is still common on very large parcels. However, with time being an issue and now the use of weed/grass killers being very accessible, this is where the sprayer comes into play. Two weeks prior to planting, spray the targeted planting area and when it's time to plant there will be "zero" competition. A good 25 gal sprayer costs around \$400-\$450 and effectively covers a 30' swath in one pass... can't do that with plows!

Next is soil preparation/tillage. For those who have bigger equipment and large areas, the 3pt hitch tiller is the ticket, but for the 4-wheelers and garden tractors there are the 33"-48" pull behind adjustable or flip-over discs. So once the competition has been sprayed and killed, these items play a major part in seed germination. Seed-to-soil contact is vital in successful germination and these items accomplish the tilling and breaking up of the soil. Good gear-driven tillers range from \$1900-\$2500 depending on size.

And now the third key principle in successful food plot building (once the competition is gone): the soil is loosened and exposed and your desired seed has been spread; that seed needs to be properly set into that soil and this would be done with a cultipacker! A cultipacker has a series of pointed wheels in a row that are typically very heavy for their size. These pointed wheels not only set the seed but also push all the air pockets out of the soil to lower the percentage of seed rot that does occur. Is a cultipacker absolutely necessary? No! but neither are food plots!



Some folks use drags, some use chain link fence, some even use the tires to roll the seed in! I'm sharing with you what I have found to be the most efficient way to be successful in building my plots. Remember... anyone can play this game and you have to start somewhere, so use what you have and as you can build up your fleet, it will only help you in the long run!

The food plot items mentioned in this article are all items that we use and sell here at LOCK-N-LOAD Sporting Goods. The line that we carry is the King Kutter line which has proven to be a quality USA made line that stands behind their products. If we can assist you or answer any questions, please give us a call at 607-687-0202 or come visit us at 161 Erie St., Owego, NY.

This is a King Kutter ATV Disk that I use for my small plots and hard-to-get-to areas.

~Jim





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Hunts for Healing

by Ken Bach

Hunts for Healing hosted six wounded veterans May 21-25 for the annual spring turkey hunt. They came from Arizona, Utah, Mississippi, Tennessee, and Ohio. Once they arrived and met their hosts and mentors, they went to Tri County Sportsman Facility to pattern their shotguns. Dale Bennett gave the safety class as well as the turkey identification information.

One thing that makes this hunt possible is the generosity of the local landowners who allow the veterans the use of their land. We can't thank them enough!

Dr. Charles Mancusso called H.F.H. and offered his property up to a veteran. He not only showed us the boundaries but provided an A.T.V. for our use. That proved to be very helpful since Christian, the marine whom Wilson Dolph mentored, lost both legs in the war. We were able to get the wheelchair and gear to the blind without spooking any birds. Four birds started gobbling on the roost but all were a good

distance away. Christian proceeded to be a good caller and was able to lure one of the birds in for the kill. Things proved to be too tight in the blind for his bow, so he opted for the shotgun to douse an 18+ lb. 2-year-old with an 8½" beard at 6:40 the first morning of the hunt. We were elated for him!

When Doc Mancusso found out that the hunt was a success, he offered to have the bird mounted for Christian. We are truly blessed to live in an area with such caring, giving people. It was an honor to spend time with the highly decorated marine. Among his medals, he was awarded the Silver Star for gallantry. His "never quit" attitude and love of the hunt made for one fun hunt.

In spite of the rain and poor hunting weather, four of the six veterans were successful at killing their gobbler. Special thanks to all who helped out in any way to make this latest hunt a success!



About the Author

Although Ken might refer to himself as a worn out, retired dry wall hanger, anyone who knows him knows better. He is one of those guys who loves everything about God's great outdoors.

Ken is a mentor for Hunts for Healing and being a Vietnam veteran, he has a special bond with his brother and sister warriors.

Ken's hunting and fishing skills are easily recognized, but what many people don't know is that he is a self-taught artist and sculptor. The birds, fish, and background art pictured here are not taxidermy mounts but are meticulously hand-carved and painted. The vibrant colors and detail are incredibly beautiful. I asked Ken how many hours he had in the pheasant sculpture and he told me he really didn't know. If he kept track of time he wouldn't do it. Ken's carvings are absolutely unique and make wonderful gifts. If you would like to contact Ken for more information, call 570-869-1373.

I'm happy to announce that my friend Ken will be sharing his outdoor skills and knowledge by becoming a staff writer for my magazine.



Old Glory 2014

This year's Hunts for Healing Old Glory Celebration at Rock Mountain Sporting Clays fell just a few days before Father's Day. It was a wonderful day of shooting and sharing experiences, hooking up with old friends, and making new ones. We dodged some rain, but all in all it was one of the best days we could have asked for. The opportunity to spend time with and connect with our veterans is priceless.

The significance of Father's Day being the same weekend as Flag Day – I realized the role of so many of our veterans as being young dads and yes, Laurie, moms! (Laurie Goodridge is my Wounded Warrior friend who is an important part of the Hunts for Healing family.) Dennis Leonard and Jim Kille had their kids with them at this year's

event and it was great watching Dennis' four-year-old daughter, Savannah, torment her dad by tickling him and then trying to get back in his good graces by offering a back rub.

Highly decorated wounded warrior, Sgt. Jim Kille and his children performed the flag folding ceremony and explained the significance of each fold.

Wounded Warrior Travis Rupert answered many questions that I had in my heart. As I observed all these wonderful young men and women who have given so much for our freedom on this Friday afternoon and the world's current events (the crisis in Iraq is escalating) the question inevitably is: Is it all worth it?

I think Travis said it best. He explained that they fight for the flag that we celebrate that day – Old Glory – not the flag of Iraq. Our flag with the stars and stripes represents our country, America, and America is us. Every American family is who they fight for and they have done this with no regret.

We are so lucky to have the true spirit of America shine through these wonderful young people who protect us and serve Old Glory. God Bless them and our flag.

If you would like to learn more about Hunts for Healing and being a part of next year's celebration, please call director Mindy Piccotti at 570-869-1233.



Laurie Goodridge tells us that Mindy and John Piccotti, through Hunts For healing programs, have done more for her than any VA.



Travis Rupert tells it best... He has no regrets about fighting for Old Glory. Simply said he fought for US!



Dennis Leonard



Mindy gave us last minute instructions just before Pastor Tim prayed for our efforts and our veterans.



Dennis Leonard playfully being picked on by his beautiful kids Ethan and Savannah.

It's Just A Food Plot

by Tony Rainville

Fall planting season is close at hand, and the anticipation of hunting season is building. What planting is going to be the “magic bean” to draw them in during hunting season? What will provide maximum nutrition and draw? The growth, attraction, and nutrition of Buck Forage Oats has proven its value in my food plots and it really is the hub of my fall plantings. As more and more deer hunters expand their horizons into the realm of management, we begin to realize that these food plots have a positive impact on all wildlife, and not just during hunting season. That impact can be short-term in a hunting plot, but good managers want to provide more. As managers, we are expanding our focus, providing for wildlife and working to minimize predation and disease. One small area may not cover all of the bases, but you can plan to cover more of the whitetail season with some simple techniques.

Monoculture Plantings: Avoid Them

Planting a single seed type – or monoculture – may draw seemingly every deer in the neighborhood at certain times of the year, but is that enough? You can easily enhance the utility of your plots at seeding time by adding some extras to the seed bin.

Plan Ahead

Typically, I try to plan each plot at least one full year ahead. Here in Upstate NY, we plant Buck Forage Oats the third week of August for maximum palatability during October and November, and to take advantage of dependable rain-fall. Buck Forage Oats does not survive our harsh winters, and I have found some methods that increase the utility of these plots in our northern climate. Before we fill the seed bin, we have a plan. We will call this August planting window Fall 1 and this starts my plot calendar. To the right are some easy to understand planting scenarios in some of the plots on our farm, with the + (extras) and objectives. → → → → →

Plot A / Hunting Plot / ½ Acre

Fall 1 Buck Forage Oats + 10% Annual Winter Rye

Objectives

Green Cover in Year 2
Nutrition & Attraction
Reduce Weeds & Grasses

Early August (Fall 2) Round up & Mow

Reduce Weeds & Grasses

Fall 2 Till & Plant:

Buck Forage Oats + 20% Annual Winter Rye

Nutrition & Attraction
Green Cover in Spring & Summer
Reduce Weeds & Grasses

Early August (Fall 3) Roundup & Mow

Reduce Weeds & Grasses

Fall 3 Till & Plant:

Buck Forage Oats + 10% Annual Winter Rye + Topseed Buck Forage Clover

Nutrition & Attraction
Establish Perennial Clover Plot

Spring / Summer 4 / 5 / 6 : Mow to promote clover Cover & Feeding for Turkey poult

Nutrition & Attraction

Plot B Feeding / Hunting Plot / 2 Acres

Fall 1 Till & Plant

Buck Forage Oats + 25% Annual Winter Rye

Objectives

Nutrition & Attraction

Spring/Summer 2: Do Nothing

Fawning Cover
Turkey Nesting Cover

Fall 2 Roundup, Mow, Till & Plant

Buck Forage Oats + 25% Annual Winter Rye

Nutrition & Attraction
Fawning / Nesting Cover
Nutrition

+ Topseed Buck Forage Clover

Year 3 Do Nothing

Fawning / Nesting Cover
Nutrition

Fall 4 Firebreak & Burn (*be careful*)

Remove vegetative matter
Reduce Tick Population

Till & Plant Buck Forage Oats

Spring 5 Till & Plant

Warm Season Plot (ie: Soybeans)

Nutrition



Buck Forage Oats/rye plot on a logging header in Columbia County, NY, four weeks after seeding in 2013.



Above is a clover plot that was top seeded last August over Buck Forage Oats mixed with 10% annual winter rye. This photo was taken in June during its first mowing.



This clover plot was seeded in the mountains of Columbia County, NY, in August 2013; photo June 2014.



Grass can be an issue in food plots. Use the above planting schedule to eliminate the grass before establishing a perennial food plot.

Captain Robin's Tour

by Scott Sienko

I stood there with the branch of a tree bent between my fingertips; it had been nipped and chewed on by a deer no doubt, that much was obvious. The interesting thing was that this branch was not level with my own height; it was far above the usual browse line. This of course seems completely absurd to a resident of northeastern Pennsylvania, but this was upstate New York and with new territory comes new conditions. We as humans are creatures of habit, so it is quite easy for us to forget just how adaptable the rest of nature can be.

After showing my cohorts and myself enjoyable times fishing on Lake Ontario, I had now come to Captain Robin Sheltra's Strike Zone Charters property in Oswego, New York. Accompanied by Jim Holbert, and Captain George Haskins of Good Times Sportfishing charters, as well as Dave Sienko, we all stood there slightly perplexed at the heightened browse line. Robin grinned; this was no oddity to him. He explained due to their vast amount of lake effect snow the deer walk atop the snow pack and browse at these heights. In such brutal conditions, in fact, the deer actually migrate into areas with more favorable conditions!

With such harsh winter conditions it must be tough to survive, but with a land owner like Robin at work, the deer should be able to breathe a little easier. Avid outdoorsmen are all over our great nation, but Robin is a cut above the rest with his diligence and management practices. He uses the techniques that many of us endorse as wise habitat management: thermal cover, plenty of food and water sources, and ethical hunting practices. However some of us forget that managing our property and turning it into a haven for whitetails and other wildlife isn't something that happens after just a year or two. Robin understands this, and as we walked with him through the fields and forest of his land, he probed us with questions looking towards the future. Things like managing forest succession, effective timber management, and the variety of seasonal browse that can be planted are just some of the things to consider when looking managing habitat for the long term. Ruffed grouse don't always favor the same habitat as black bears, and deer have their own preferences as well, so depending on the results you want, it is wise to consider just what direction to take a piece of property.

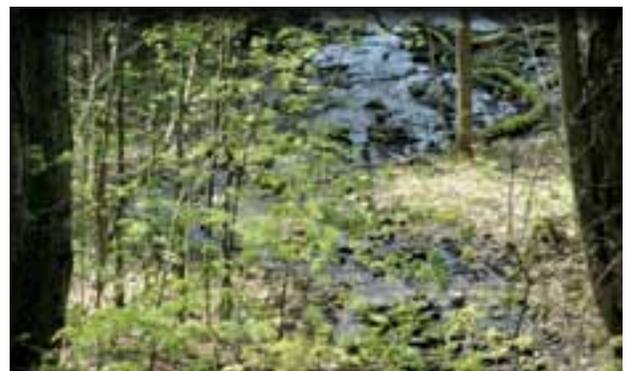
The key thing that I have noticed as I have been learning how to manage habitat among these seasoned veterans is that there is no set plan for each landowner. Every property is unique, and you have to look at each one on a case-by-case basis. What works in one spot, might not do the trick elsewhere – whether it's five miles down the road, or one hundred miles away. You've got to find out what's just right for you and the wildlife you want to attract. I would like to take a moment to thank Robin for his hospitality on this trip, and also thank both him and George Haskins for their stand out service as fishing charter captains!



Dave Sienko (l) and Captain Robin are Buck Forage dealers (see Dave's ad on page 11). To contact Captain Robin, call 315-298-2074.



You would think that there were giraffes browsing on these branches. Captain Robin's property sees over 400" of snow annually. With an average base of snow exceeding five feet, it's easy to see how deer manage to get to this browse line.



The never-drying springs on Captain Robin's property are part of the Tug Hill aquifer. This is a 47-mile long underground rock and soil formation that was created by retreating glaciers. This is an awesome source of fresh water!

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Captain Robin Sheltra
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607-768-9121

It's Just a Food Plot, continued from page 18

Summary

Our wildlife food plots provide many benefits to wildlife outside of traditional hunting seasons, and we can enhance our efforts by having a plan and thinking on nature's terms. I know that some of this advice may contradict what the experts say on the Internet, particularly some of my preferred planting dates, and the fact that I don't mention fertilizer (that's because I don't use any in these scenarios), and as you can see by the pictures, it's not always necessary. These planting schedules work in my neck of the woods, and if you live in the northeast, it will likely work in yours, too.



This plot was seeded with a higher percent of rye to provide cover and build organic content in the poor mountain soil. Planted August 2013; photo taken June 2014.

About the Author: Tony Rainville has been developing wildlife habitats in the northeast for over 25 years, manages a QDM Cooperative in NY, is a QDMA Certified Land Inspector and active QDMA 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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Buckwheat – Miracle Crop for the “Lazy” Wildlife Manager

by Robert Fearnley

It is the middle of summer; the food plot you intended to plant in May still hasn't been planted and is starting to grow weeds. The soil isn't the best and may be a little on the damp side. Your wife is asking, "You're spending how much to feed the deer!?" If there was just an easy answer to your problems... Maybe there is... buckwheat! Buckwheat is a crop that has a long history and many uses. Perhaps buckwheat pancakes come to mind and for many years that was the primary use for this grain. However, when food plots became the rage, a whole new use for this plant was discovered.

For those of you unfamiliar with this crop, let's clear up one thing first. Buckwheat is not wheat, which is in the grass family. In fact, buckwheat is more closely related to rhubarb than wheat. It has rather broad leaves on a plant that can grow hip high. The seed or "grain" is triangular, looking like a small beechnut. Originally from Southeast Asia, its cultivation in Europe over 5,000 years ago was the first sign of agriculture in Europe. It was one of the first crops introduced to America with the European settlement and by the 18th and 19th centuries was a major crop in the northeast United States. Its popularity began to wane in the 20th century when nitrogen fertilizer became cheap and plentiful. Soon the nitrogen-loving cereal grains like wheat, oats and rye, gained in productivity and began to push buckwheat to the background. Because of this, the USDA quit keeping track of the acres planted in the 1960s. It is still an important crop in Europe and Asia.

In my youth, it was known as a "lazy farmer's crop." If a farmer just couldn't seem to get around to planting a crop in the spring, buckwheat was often his choice for a late crop. The reasons it was popular with yesterday's "lazy farmer" are the same reasons it is a good choice for a mid-summer food plot for today's game manager. The climate of the northeast is very much to buckwheat's liking. It prefers warm soils but cool nights. It is very forgiving of soil types and fertility levels. It can grow unbelievably fast. I have had buckwheat go from seed to flowering within a month, producing mature seed in six weeks to two months. Buckwheat grows so fast and so thick that it can smother out other weeds, even those with a head start. Many organic farmers use buckwheat for weed control. It is an excellent "green manure" crop that

when tilled into the soil increases fertility and the tilth of the next crop's soil.

Buckwheat appeals to a wide range of wildlife throughout its lifespan. Deer will graze on the foliage when it is young and immature. They will strip the mature seed heads off the plants as will turkeys and many species of songbirds. Doves will feed on buckwheat seed after the plants have been mowed and/or disked lightly. Turkey poults will work through buckwheat in search of bugs. Rabbits find shade and cover during the late summer. Buckwheat flowers heavily and for several weeks, which is great for pollinators; and its honey is very dark with lots of flavor.

Buckwheat is very easily planted with a minimum of equipment. I plant mine with a no-till drill after spraying with glyphosate (Round-Up), but it can be either broadcast or drilled after light conventional tillage. Cultipacking after broadcasting will ensure good soil-seed contact. I have never fertilized my buckwheat and have always had a good stand of plants. In fact, over-fertilization of buckwheat can lead to more problems than under-fertilizing. Not only does buckwheat need little (if any) fertilizer, the seed is very economical. A 50-pound bag at the local feed store costs approximately \$40.00 and will plant an acre. If you want, you can mix buckwheat with other seed such as sunflowers, sorghum and millet. Remember to cut back the pounds of seed per acre in mixes.

Buckwheat can be managed according to your needs. As a summer annual, it can be disked in six weeks' time to provide a seed bed for a fall planted crop such as brassicas or a fall clover seeding. By killing the plant while the seed is still immature, you will prevent self-seeding. However, if you wish to have buckwheat in a plot multiple years, just let the buckwheat mature and the amount of seed that escapes the wildlife will be plenty to plant the next crop. One of my plots has had buckwheat for three years in a row with no tillage or additional seed.

Buckwheat can be the solution to many food plot problems. It can be planted well after many full season annual crops, it provides agronomic benefits and is very easy on the wallet. It truly is a miracle crop for the "lazy" wildlife manager or maybe for the "smart" wildlife manager.



Left: straight buckwheat
Right: buckwheat mixed with millet and sunflowers

Dunstan Chestnut Tree Planting

by Zach Whittaker

The Delaware-Chenango-Madison-Otsego Board of Cooperative Educational Services (DCMO BOCES) students spent a day with wildlife management professionals Jim Holbert and Matt Sellers this spring planting ten Dunstan chestnut trees on their school property in Trout Creek, NY. Students spent valuable time with Jim and Matt learning the correct techniques to Dunstan chestnut tree planting, which were donated by Matt Sellers and the Susquehanna branch QDMA. Students learned how to prepare an area where a tree is to be planted, space the trees for optimum pollination, which is an important step often overlooked, especially with chestnut trees. Lastly, students learned how to use a tree tube properly and stake the trees. The students had a lot of fun working with Jim and Matt and asked several good questions concerning tree form, growth, fruit and wildlife habitat production. Students learned that Dunstan chestnut trees are outstanding wildlife trees that can produce fruit in as few as 2-5 years. This fruit is found to be the most preferred nut by whitetail deer even over white oak acorns. Dunstan chestnut trees are a cross between the American and Chinese chestnut which makes them resistant to the blight that killed all of North America's chestnut trees. Although nowhere near the size of the once mighty American chestnut, Dunstan chestnuts do reach heights of 30+ feet and a diameter of 14-16 inches. The students at BOCES look forward to caring for the trees that were planted and studying growth and productivity of the trees over the next several years.

The instructors and students in the DCMO BOCES Conservation program would like to give a big thank you to Jim Holbert and Matt Sellers for the time spent with the class as well as for the Dunstan chestnut tree and Buck Forage oat seed donations to the program. Thanks, guys!



Matt Sellers (R) presents Zach Whittaker with Buck Forage seed for his students to plant this Fall.



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Vultures, the Destructive Teenager of the Bird World



by Kyle
Van Why

“What are those big black birds that are sitting on my house?” This is a common question that comes up more often than most people think. The birds are usually vultures, although some call them buzzards and a few might even call them “harbingers of death,” but that might be a little extreme. If they are called any of the above, or any other name people give them and have a bald head, they are most likely one of two species, turkey vulture (*Cathartes aura*) or black vulture (*Coragyps atratus*). The two species look and behave similarly, although – like their namesake – turkey vultures can have a bright red (or pinkish) head, while black vultures are slightly smaller and have a black head. Both species are becoming fairly common in Pennsylvania, where historically turkey vultures only occurred. Black vultures, historically a southern bird, have moved north and now occur in much of the eastern and southern portions of the state. The birds occur in Pennsylvania year round, but numbers may vary depending on the season and location within the state.

Vultures are scavengers, and are really good at their jobs. Turkey vultures actually have a very good sense of smell, as well as sight. Black vultures don’t smell as well, but have better vision and act as a bully. Although they are smaller than their red-headed cousin, they are more aggressive and will use their kin to find food and chase them away. It’s a fact vultures cause damage to agriculture producers by attacking livestock. Vultures may congregate around a lamb or cow while birthing and attack the newborn, often killing the young animal while the mother is recovering. In some cases the birds may attack the adult in an attempt to get to the afterbirth. Vultures will congregate at carcasses, as per their nature, but in an agricultural situation there is the potential that they may spread disease to healthy animals. Disposing of carcasses quickly is an important management tool when this is a problem.

As communities grow, vultures have infiltrated both suburban and urban

settings and caused problems. This is often due to their roosting and loafing behavior. These big black birds like to hang out with other big black birds. Roosts range in size from 5-50 birds, with some being as high as 100. Birds may roost on trees, buildings, towers, or poles. The biggest complaint is their feces, which can be corrosive and smell very bad, especially if there are a lot of birds at the roost – that and the fact that the giant birds look ominous sitting on someone’s house. Something that most people don’t realize when they have a roost on a building is that they will cause damage. This



is not just from their droppings, but they peck at the structure they are on. This often includes ripping shingles off roofs, putting holes in rubber roofing, or damaging windows. The birds seem to have an affinity to rubber and plastic and have been known to damage kid’s toys, lawn furniture, pools, and even rip the rubber out from around car windows. No one knows why they do this; some think that pulling on rubber mimics their feeding behavior, others feel that it is just something to do while they are sitting around bored. Kind of like a bunch of teenagers sitting around with nothing to do, they find something to entertain themselves (vultures don’t have access to smartphones).

So what can a landowner do to deal with this problem? There are options; the best thing to do is research and/or call for advice. Removing food (covering garbage, outside dog food, and dead animals) can help reduce vulture comfort levels, but many roosts are not associated with food. Sometimes birds just like a roost for the ability to sit undisturbed, so harassment is important. Vultures are protected; they are governed under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. That means you cannot kill any, without a permit. You can conduct harassment, sometimes noise harassment alone works, banging pots and pans, fireworks, air horns, shooting in the air (not at the birds), even smacking 2X4’s has been effective. The key is to be consistent and don’t give up. Harassment over 10-15 days is often required. Using lasers at night and physically bothering the birds can also be effective. Physical harassment includes water hoses and tennis balls. In extreme cases shooting paint balls into the trees can be effective (but avoid hitting the birds unless you have a permit). Speaking of the permit, the USDA-Wildlife Services (WS) program can assist in obtaining a depredation permit, which allows the lethal take of a few birds to enforce harassment activities. Also vultures have a strange behavior of responding to the site of their own dead hung near the roost. This method called an “effigy” can be



Continued on page 30

Vultures continued from page 29

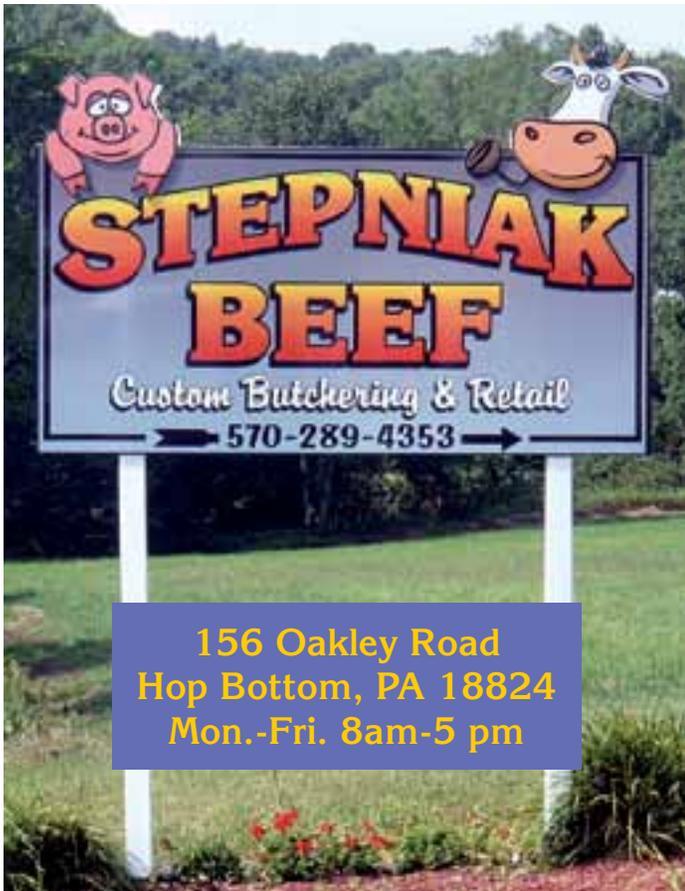


employed to drive the birds from the roost, and can use a real bird taken under the depredation permit, a taxidermy mount like the WS program uses, and even a homemade or Halloween decoration can occasionally be effective. As mentioned above, a lethal take permit can be obtained to help enforce non-lethal management activities.

Vulture numbers are increasing in the northeastern United States, encroaching into environments where they historically did not occur or were rarely seen. The key to reducing damage is education, knowing what species is the problem, understanding why it might be using a specific site, being prepared to conduct management, and willing to ask for assistance. Many individuals can conduct management on their own and only need guidance to solve their problems, while other situations require more specialized attention. Management methods and permit assistance can be explained better by contacting the WS program (1-866-487-3297).

So next time you see a kettle of vultures (a large group of circling vultures), remember they are going to land somewhere to hang out for the afternoon or night. Just hope it is not in your backyard, on your house, barn, garage, or business (libraries, banks, and office buildings are favorite spots too).

An advertisement for Shadow Hunter blinds. On the left is a ground-level blind with a camouflage pattern of leaves and branches. On the right is a tall tower blind on a wooden tripod stand with a ladder leading up to it. The background shows a field with a lightning bolt in the sky. Text includes the brand name 'SHADOW HUNTER' in a stylized font, the slogan 'TAKING THE HUNTING WORLD BY STORM', and the tagline 'YOUR TOTAL COMFORT HUNTING BLIND'. A logo for 'LOCK-N-LOAD SPORTING GOODS' is in the bottom right, and the website 'www.shadowhunterblinds.com' is at the bottom left.



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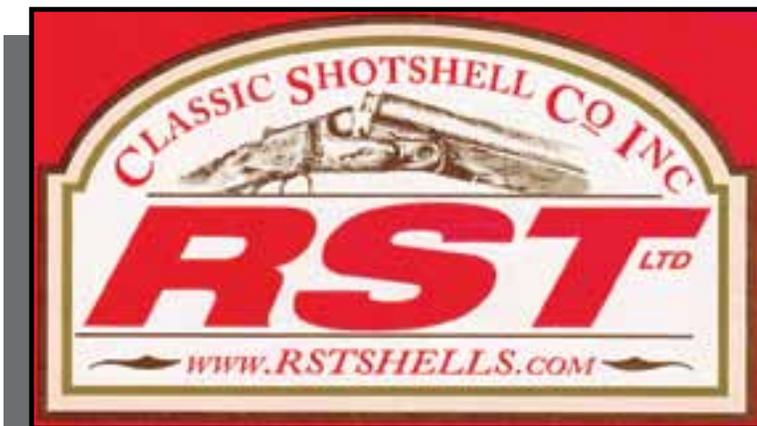


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Projects to Avoid Winter-kill

by Jim Stickles, Associate Wildlife Biologist®

This winter was long and brutal! I am sure many outdoorsmen are wondering what toll it took on the wildlife – more specifically, what it did to the deer herd. I have received numerous reports of winter-killed deer found throughout the northern states, especially Pennsylvania. It is truly sad when deer become winter-kill statistics rather than become delicious table fare and wall-mounted memories. It is not realistic to think we can completely prevent winter-kill from occurring during a harsh winter, but there are some steps we can take to minimize its impact.



Pennsylvania winter-kill.

Photo Credit – Hunting Pennsylvania

Food Plots for Winter Survival

Approximately 8-12 inches of snow or 3-4 inches of ice can make a food source at ground level completely unavailable. Although brassicas, cereal grains, and clover are popular fall food plot plantings, during the winter they can be rendered useless for extended periods of time, leaving deer to rely on browse. Although deer can survive on browse, if your goal is to minimize winter-kill, then deer should not be exclusively feeding on browse for long periods of time.

For winter survival, deer need high energy food that remains suspended above the snow and ice. Standing corn and soybeans are excellent winter forage selections! However, both come with “special care” precautions. For example, corn is susceptible to numerous insect and mammalian pests, and dry summer conditions can limit crop production. Soybeans should be planted as early in the planting season as possible, but they either need to be

protected for the first few weeks after planting, or they need to be planted in large enough acreages (usually 3+ acres) to avoid intense deer browsing. Forage soybeans, such as Eagle Seed soybeans, are preferred as they are more tolerant of browsing, and they will continue to grow until they are hit by a frost. After frost has killed the leaves, the remaining seed pods will feed deer throughout the winter. Corn and soybeans are the primary staples of winter forage, so if you do not have any planted, you may want to consider planting at least a few acres in future years.



Standing corn provides a high-energy food source that stays above the snow and ice. <http://agwired.com/2009/12/>



Standing soybeans also provide a high-energy food source that stays above the snow and ice. <http://www.growingdeer.tv/view/2014/02/07/managing-whitetails-the-best-food-plots-for-a-cold-winter/>

Growing Sanctuaries

A winter food plot plan is a great start to preparing your hunting property for winter weather, but deer need food and cover in close proximity to each other. A growing sanctuary provides both! A growing sanctuary is an area of the property that is designated as “off limits” to hunting and other recreational activities, and is maintained in early succession habitat using common forest management techniques, such as timber stand improvement (TSI), hinge cutting, hack & squirt, tree girdling, clear cutting, and prescribed fire. The goal of this area is to allow light to hit the forest floor so new plant life can grow and create thick, nasty cover which also serves as browse. As for location, south facing slopes are ideal as deer can then take advantage of the afternoon sun to help warm their bodies. If your property lacks south facing slopes, then locating sanctuaries in close proximity to food plots is important. Keeping these areas “off limits” helps to reduce human influenced movement activity and stress, thereby helping deer to retain good physical condition throughout the winter.



Since the tree is not completely severed from the stump, hinge cutting brings tree tops to ground level and produces new sprouts providing excellent browse. <http://www.buckadvisor.com/2228/two-birds-one-cut-deer-food-cover/>

Account for Seasonal Influx

If you take steps to improve the habitat and increase the amount of food on your property, keep in mind that your habitat improvements may attract deer from neighboring properties during the winter. The pulling power of a good food source can be substantial, so do not underestimate how much food you



Example of hack & squirt.

<http://www.qdma.com/articles/hack-and-squirt-for-timber-stand-improvement>

may need to provide. On average, each deer needs 3-4 lbs. of food per day to survive. It is not unusual for well-tuned property to attract deer from 1-2 miles away accounting for an influx of 30-40+ deer! This is not an exaggeration, and I have regularly observed deer shift their home ranges during the winter months to take advantage of nearby food sources and/or thermal cover.

Harvest Does Early

For the purpose of maximizing the amount of winter food availability, it is important to set harvest objectives, and accomplish them as early in the season as possible. Every deer that is harvested early in the hunting season is a deer that is not feeding on the property's winter forages during the fall months. For example, let's say you set a harvest objective to remove 10 does from your property to help balance the herd with the habitat. Assuming these deer eat 3 lbs. of potential winter forage per day, the 10 does will eat approximately 210 lbs. of winter forage per week. By harvesting the animals early in the season, you will minimize the amount of winter forage consumed before winter conditions begin. In my opinion, it is a complete waste of food resources to wait until the last minute to harvest does.

Conclusion

Harvesting does is the cheapest and easiest way to maintain the balance between herd and habitat to minimize winter-kill. However, hunters tend to be conservative when it comes to harvesting does, and would rather manipulate the landscape to support more deer than reduce the herd. Strategic food plotting, combined with growing sanctuaries, is a great way to create a lot of winter forage. Creating enough winter forage to account for an influx of deer during the winter helps to ensure that deer are sufficiently fed throughout the winter. Finally, setting doe harvest objectives and accomplishing them early in the season can help to ensure that sufficient food resources are available throughout the winter. We will never be able to eliminate winter-kill, but implementing these practices can minimize the impact of a brutal winter.



Do not underestimate the "pulling power" of a good food source during the winter months.

<http://www.deeranddeerhunting.com/forum/viewtopic.php?f=28&t=1465>

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(L to R) Steve Rossie of Chenango Forks, NY; Gary Wade of Oxford, NY; and Charlie Dix of Pleasant Mount, PA, enjoy each other's company at the Dunstan Chestnut Sale pick up day at the Sellers' residence.

Matt and Denise Sellers, coordinators of the Susquehanna Branch QDMA, want to thank everyone for their overwhelming support of this year's Dunstan Chestnut Tree Sale. This year's sale topped over 1,100 chestnut trees.

They appreciate all who traveled so far to pick up their trees and shared a cup of coffee. The tree pick up day has turned into quite a social event and folks love to compare notes and stories. It's hard to believe people travel over 100 miles to pick up their order, but they do every year!

Again, thanks to all and thank you for enhancing wildlife.

This edition of Wildlife Management News is dedicated in memory of Albert Sellers, avid outdoorsman.





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Bird Feeding Tips:

- **Want more songbirds?** Add feeders to provide more feeding locations. If the typical feeder has four seed ports, adding two more feeders means twelve birds at a time can feast on Aspen Song.
- **Want more variety?** Offer different mixes in different feeder types. Understand the food preferences and foraging habits of different groups of seed-eaters, and provide choices to them.
- **Become a dependable "food patch"** by keeping feeders full all year long. Seed-eating songbirds return to a productive, natural seed source until the food is completely consumed before moving on. By keeping your feeders filled, they will continue to return to your yard for sustenance.
- **Keep your feathered guests healthy.** Protect seed from the elements, keep it fresh. Clean feeders regularly, take up and remove seed hulls.
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