WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT News

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THE HARVEST PLOT
BUCK FORAGE OATS

Timing of Antler Growth

Article by Dr. James Kroll
Antler Development Photos by Dave Larnerd

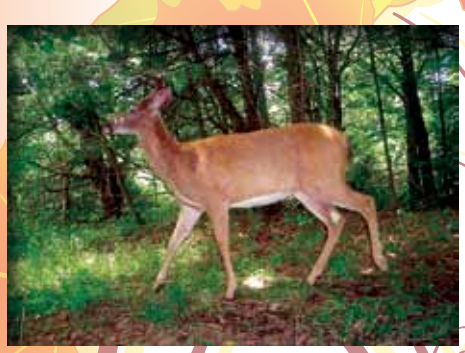
The actual timing of antler development is remarkably consistent across the geographic range of whitetails. The variability comes with the timing of the rut. Depending on its timing, dates of velvet shedding and antler casting vary greatly. I will begin with most variable portion of the antler cycle: antler casting.

Casting of antlers is directly related to the timing of the rut. In some areas, such as portions of Florida, the rut may take place as early as August or September, while in other regions, such as Mississippi, it may occur as late as February. Apparently, antler casting is influenced by the nervous system and the level of male hormones in the blood. Once male sex hormones (mostly testosterone) are depleted in the blood, the abscission layer forms rapidly, and antler casting occurs shortly thereafter. I regularly see bucks with shed antlers as early as the last part of December in East Texas; yet, Dr. Harry Jacobson of Mississippi State University notes that his deer cast as late as the last week of March. I have seen antlered bucks in Mexico as late as the middle of April. Whatever the time of casting, the regrowth of new antlers appears to be somewhat consistent from one geographic region to the next, although individual bucks may be exceptions.

The appearance of a noticeable antler bud usually occurs in the period from March 15 to April 15. As noted, antler growth initially proceeds at a snail's pace, then accelerates in later stages, similar to compound interest. By the first part of May, antler growth begins to show acceleration. A noticeable bud now extends well above the pedicel and is somewhat enlarged and bulbous at its tip. This bulb will give rise to the brow tines, also called "dog catchers." The brow tines develop during June. It appears to me that each pair of tines is well developed before development of the next pair reaches completion. By the end of June, the brow tines are well established, and the growing beam produces a new set of bulbs which will become the primary tines. During July, some of the ornamentation that often occurs at the base of the antler begins to develop. These are such traits as extra points and bifurcation (branching) of the brow tines.

August brings completion of brow tine development and the establishment of a well-defined primary tine. Antler growth really begins to accelerate by this time. By the end of August, the secondary tine bulbs have formed and developed into tines and any extra points from the primary tines have begun to form. These extra points go under many names, some of which are "kicker" and "stickers." It also is at this time that the rarest of all points, the drop tines, may begin to make their appearance.

The first week in September usually finds the antler near completion, especially in younger bucks.



JUNE 26



JULY 4



JULY 22



JULY 22

Continued on page 2

Timing of Antler Growth continued from page 1

It appears to me that antler growth is completed earlier in young bucks than in more mature ones.

The velvet-shedding process also is highly variable in timing from one portion of the whitetail's range to the next. In Texas, for example, velvet shedding occurs sometime in mid- to late September. Therefore, early October finds the bucks in hardened antler. It could be a bit earlier or later in your region, depending upon the breeding dates. We now have come full circle in antler development.

Taken from "A Practical Guide to Producing and Harvesting White-tailed Deer" by Dr. James C. Kroll



YOUNG BUCK IN VELVET



JULY 22



JULY 26



AUGUST 18



AUGUST 20



AUGUST 25

Problem Bears

Don't turn your back on the problem!

And these guys ARE a problem. You have more than likely seen "problem bears" making their debuts on national and local television recently. Bears are on the prowl to fatten up this time of year and with their growing numbers they can show up anywhere. We've even seen them busting into stores in Pittsburgh. Maybe that's why my Pirates couldn't concentrate on baseball.

In most cases our black bears are looking for an easy handout meal. Hang bird feeders high. Clean barbecue grills and put them away if you don't use them year round. If you keep your garbage can outside, consider pouring some straight ammonia in the can. The super strong odor is offensive to sensitive noses and a great disinfectant as well.





The Devastating Effects of a Major Weather Event

In May of 2002 we purchased an adjoining property. I remember how great I felt when taking my first walk through the 13-acre woodlot that's on this property. This was my first woodland purchase, so I picked up a book on Woodlot management, and learned about timber value and creating wildlife habitat in the woods. We heat our home with wood so I learned what trees to harvest. This thinned the lesser-value trees that were competing with mass-producing trees and opened up the canopy letting light to the forest floor. The woods came alive with new blackberry brambles, tree seedlings and wildlife. I took it a step further and enrolled the property in a wildlife habitat program through the USDA/NRCS. This made it possible for me to remove all lesser-value trees that were competing with the hickory, cherry and service berry trees and plant some more desirable trees and shrubs. We enjoyed taking walks on a trail that I had cleared around the perimeter of the woodlot and I also planted a food plot seed mix on part of it. I had the woods just about the way I thought it should look but had no control over what happened next.

On July 26th around 5:20 pm, I received a call from my wife telling me that we had some trees on the ground after a high wind storm. I returned home to find that our driveway was blocked by many downed trees.

The National Weather Service confirmed that an EF1 tornado passed through the neighboring field and straight line winds tore a large path through our and the neighboring woods. We spent the next few days cleaning up the immediate area around our house with the help of friends and family. I finally brought myself to take the walk through the entire woods and found that about eight acres of our trees are now lying on the ground. A lot of the trees were uprooted with the root balls leaving large craters. We have minor damage as compared to some of the neighboring properties. Our woods will never look the same again. Honestly I was a little upset at first but now see this as a positive wildlife habitat improvement. This produced tons of future browse for the deer and a lot of species of wildlife will benefit from the cover and renewed life on the forest floor. The sunlight can now reach some areas of the forest floor that were previously shaded and will promote regeneration. My future plans are to have a salvage cut completed in the woodlot, open the trails and clear enough treetops to replant hybrid white oak, chestnut, some spruce trees and of course rebuild my tree stand.

A special thanks to Jim Holbert for inviting me on the plane to take aerial photos of the storm damage and to all who helped upright tree shelters and clear trees from our driveway.

— Matthew Sellers







TORNADO FACTS

- The most powerful Tornadoes occur in the United States.
- A typical tornado only lasts for a few minutes.
- Every tornado has its own color, sound and shape.
- You need to step on the pedal of a car past 70 miles per hour to outrun the fastest tornadoes.
- The chances that a tornado is an F5, the highest classification for a tornado on the F-scale, is less than 0.1%
- Tornadoes have been reported in every state in the US and also in every season.
- A Tornado can occur at any time, but most often between 3pm and 9pm.

Removing the Pennsylvania Prohibition on Sunday Hunting

By Kathy Davis and Don Heckman

Hunters United for Sunday Hunting (HUSH) is a registered non-profit charitable organization founded and funded by hunters in order to challenge the legality of the ban on Sunday hunting in Pennsylvania. HUSH intends to overturn the Sunday hunting ban, the last Blue Law in Pennsylvania that restricts an otherwise lawful recreational activity on Sundays. Our objective is to grant the regulatory control of Sunday hunting to the Pennsylvania Game Commission (PGC) who supports the lifting of the ban.

Hunting is the only recreational activity that is prohibited on Sunday, and in order to overturn this in court, we must look to history and learn why and when the prohibition was put in place.

When William Penn established Pennsylvania, he created a charter in 1683 in which Penn asserts "everyone shall have the right to hunt in PA on their own land and all lands not enclosed…( ). During the early prohibition era, Penn returned to Pennsylvania and he, along with the Quakers, reasserted that hunting and fishing should remain lawful recreational activities on Sunday.

In July 1776, our founding document names hunting as a right under **SECT. 43.** "The inhabitants of this state shall have liberty to fowl and hunt in seasonable times on the lands they hold, and on all other lands therein not enclosed; and in like manner to fish in all boatable waters, and others not private property."

This was removed from the text of the 1790 Constitution; however, noteworthy of the PA Constitutional



Convention (of 1790) is the following quote: "The rights of the people under the bill of rights remained unchanged, for these were issues on which liberals and conservatives agreed." This was upheld again in 1968. So do we have the "Right to hunt" in Pennsylvania? That will be up to the court to decide, but we hope so!

In 1873, the Blue Law prohibiting hunting on Sunday passed. Nearly 2,000 "special laws" were passed during this time.

As a result, in 1874 the Equal Protection clause was established as Article 3 Section 32. The (Pennsylvania) General Assembly shall pass **no local or special law in any case** which has been or can be provided for by general law and specifically the General Assembly shall not pass any local or special law. Nor shall the General Assembly indirectly enact any special or local law by the partial repeal of a general law; but laws repealing local or special acts may be passed.

There are two theories behind the Blue Law. One was as a religious day of rest, which favored Sunday sabbatarians over all other religions. The other was so the land barons of the day would have the game to themselves much like it was in England, given that working class people worked six days a week.

In either case, it is time for the law to fall, as neither of those reasons are lawful as they favor one group of people over all others. If hunting is still indeed a "right," then surely the courts will rule in favor of hunters. I can't imagine a court upholding a law that says "You have the right to free speech, except on Sunday, or you have the right to bear arms; except on Sunday."

The courts have consistently held that there must be valid secular reasons to uphold Blue Laws. We've seen many reasons for opposing Sunday hunting, but we have yet to see one that would pass muster in a court of law.

Continued on next page

Some of the reasons we have seen are “Non-hunters deserve a day in the woods without hunters and fear of being shot.” Let’s set the record straight. Hunting is one of the safest recreational activities a person can participate in; it’s even safer among non-hunters. You have a higher chance of being struck by lightning, or dying by being stung by a bee than you do being struck by an errant bullet. According to the National Safety Council, hunting is safer than hiking, golf, swimming and cheerleading.

“I don’t want Sunday hunting on my land – or I’ll close my land to all hunting if Sunday hunting becomes a reality.”

No one will be forced to open their land on Sunday. In fact, the Commissioners have stated that “No Sunday Hunting” signs would be given free of charge to their cooperators. No one will make anyone hunt on Sunday.

We do realize some additional land will be closed when Sunday hunting becomes reality, but there will also be millions of acres of land OPEN on Sunday to the benefit of those who practice their religion on Saturday, or to those who have to work six days a week. This is a freedom issue, and everyone should have the choice to participate (or not) on any given day of the week.

Pennsylvania recruits only 68 hunters for every one hundred it loses. With the number of hunters in Pennsylvania decreasing, it is important to keep hunting traditions alive by allowing more time for young hunters to get out in the field. Research shows that the best way to recruit new hunters is to have a family member introduce them to hunting.

The time constraints and complications brought on by modern life have made it difficult for hunters to get young hunters out on the field. With an increase in single parent families and in families with multiple working adults, it is challenging to find time to hunt during the work week. With the current ban, some families are left with just one day a week to hunt. Lifting the ban on Sunday hunting will offer Pennsylvania families an opportunity of a second day to hunt on the weekends if they wish to take it. Hunting is one of the greatest opportunities for families to spend quality time together.

We hope you will join us.

http://www.huntsunday.com/



Finding Beatrice

By June Sienko

Sometimes God uses ordinary people and things to perform his everyday miracles. This short article is written by my friends June and Dave Sienko. If you ever have a chance to speak to them personally about their experience in saving Beatrice, please do so.

Hunting is our ultimate family recreational activity. Trail cameras are placed strategically throughout the property to hopefully catch a glimpse of wildlife passing through. Adam & Jessica arrived for a visit to give us a helping hand spraying ferns. They too are avid hunters so Dave and Adam set the game cameras out on Sunday evening.

It has been one of the hottest summers on record. After spraying ferns with backpack sprayers all week, everyone needed a break. The rains came Thursday afternoon, which meant no more spraying. Friday afternoon Dave took Jessica and Adam to check the camera's to see what critters were out and about in the heat. While viewing the photos, Adam asked Dave if he was accustomed to catching people on his cameras. This particular camera was way on top of the mountain and seeing people was a rare occurrence, even during hunting season. The game camera displayed a photo of a woman. Dave was very concerned as he remembered that while watching the Tuesday evening news a photo of a missing woman, Beatrice Phelps, was shown. Checking the date and time, it appeared that Beatrice had somehow managed to climb to the top of the mountain and had her picture taken around 4:34 PM, Tuesday evening. It was now late Friday afternoon. No reports had been on the news of the woman being found so a call was placed to the State Police Barracks. Thus began one of the most important hunts of Dave's life.

The state police verified the identity of the woman in the photo. Now missing for four days, with no food or drink, during one of the hottest weeks on record, could Beatrice still be alive? The state troopers asked Dave to show them where the camera was located. After doing a quick sweep of the area they decided that they would need a lot of help if we were going to find the lost woman. With help from the county sheriff and local fire departments, a grid search of the area was put in motion. There were only a few hours of daylight left and the terrain to cover was rough. Dave led the search

Continued on page 26



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Elk Country

Submitted by Donna Salko

Ahhh, fall...

Welcome to crisp mornings, crimson leaves against the azure blue sky and the sound of bugling elk piercing through the serenely quite countryside.

You don't have to be in a Rocky Mountain state to enjoy this wilderness feast – north central Pennsylvania will do just fine. Set your vehicle's GPS to Route 555 through Benezette, PA. It is the site of the Elk Country Visitor Center, a premier elk watching area situated on 245 acres in the Elk State Forest. There you will be thrilled to watch a resident herd of elk on the visitor center grounds. Traveling north a short 3½ miles, you may spot another herd on Winslow Hill Road where the PGC maintains an elk viewing area with up close and personal viewing. There you will find off road parking, a pavilion, and portable toilets. Hicks Run Viewing Area runs along route 555 12 miles east of Benezette. Elk can commonly be seen in the early morning and late afternoon hours. Other viewing areas are listed in the PGC brochure "Watching Wildlife in Elk Country," however, just a slow ride through this country may turn up elk grazing near the roads, on farm pasture and even on resident lawns. It is a sight that will not soon be forgotten!

September and October are the key months for viewing elk (with anytime between fall and early spring also exceptable). Fall is elk mating season and bull elk leave their bachelor groups to join the ranks of the cows and calves hoping to command a harem. Sparing and bugling are commonplace and tourists from all over the world congregate to observe these fall rituals. It is estimated that nearly 100,000 visitors will be on hand during these months.

Pennsylvania is home to an estimated 800 elk, the largest herd in the northeast United States. Many organizations partnered in restoring elk to this part of PA. The Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, the NWTF, Safari Club International, sportsmen associations and clubs and dedicated volunteers, as well as several governmental organizations were instrumental in initiating this grass roots project. Today, the Keystone Elk Country Alliance, the DCNR and the PGC share the responsibilities. Staff and volunteers work tirelessly for the conservation of elk, critical habitat and range. Research is ongoing and funded with foundation dollars, donations and grants.

Elk are stunning animals. My trip to Elk State Forest was incredibly more than I ever could have imagined. Eagerly last October I packed up all my camera gear, tripods, binoculars and multiple layers of clothing, hoping I would see an elk or two. I saw hundreds! Arriving around noon, I did not expect much, yet by 12:30 PM I had taken a slew of photos of the bull elk who presented himself against a beautiful background of pine trees. I spent hours between the Visitors Center and Hicks Run Viewing Area intoxicated by the bugling. I watched joyously as the raghorn bull tried his luck at seducing any female and was awed by the commanding stature of the mature herd bull. My first time experience in Elk Country was breathtakingly spectacular. It is a 4-hour trip from here to Benezette, so an overnight stay in the surrounding area is advised. Those who venture into Elk Country can not possibly be disappointed!



DONNA SALKO AT THE ELK COUNTRY VISITOR CENTER





The Majestic Bull Elk

By June Sienko

If you have never experienced the wondrous majesty of a bull Elk or heard one bugle, you are missing out on one of nature's gifts. Pennsylvania is home to a small but vivacious heard of elk. Appropriately named, Elk county, is one of the places you can go to see these magnificent animals. If you travel to Winslow Hill, in September, the chances of seeing a mighty bull and his harem are pretty good. The game commission has a viewing platform that overlooks acres of reclaimed strip mines that the elk inhabit regularly. The fields there are planted with a mixture of grasses that elk like to graze on. There is also an elk visitor's center where the history of Pennsylvania's elk herd is shared along with other articles of interest for the elk enthusiast. There are many places to stay in and around the county and most offer maps of the elk viewing areas.







TIPS FOR FIELD JUDGING ELK

MISSOULA, Mont.—A trophy bull can turn up almost anywhere in elk country but opportunities to take one are rare. When a monster steps out, a hunter often has no time to count antler points, much less compute scores. But not always. Sometimes there's ample chance to really focus and size up an elk in your search for the bull of a lifetime.

Will you know a world-class trophy if you see one?

"All elk hunters are fascinated by antlers, but not everyone recognizes what it takes to grow trophies. Big headgear is a product of genetics, age and nutrition provided by great habitat," said David Allen, president and CEO of the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation. "Learning to field judge antlers will help you understand even more about the elk you're looking at, whether it's one for the record books—or one to let walk away and grow up."

COUNTING POINTS—Most mature bull elk are 6x6s. An elk's first antlers are usually spikes. In good habitat, a bull may have a 5-point rack as a 2-1/2-year-old and then a small six-point rack as a 3-1/2-year-old. Its best antlers, however, usually come at age 9-1/2 to 12-1/2, so remember that not every 6x6 is a trophy. Instantly identifying a six-point bull is not difficult. The fourth point, sometimes called the dagger point, is normally the longest point and most distinctive feature of an elk rack. If the main beam goes straight back from the dagger you're almost certainly looking at a five-point antler. If there's another point rising upward behind the dagger, perhaps making a horizontal "Y," then you're looking at a six-point antler.

A perfect, typical trophy rack has a combination of long points, long beams, good mass and a wide spread. However, some of these criteria are more important than others. Let's look at each.

BEAM LENGTH—Most great elk have long main beams. In the all-time records book, the average beam length of the top 10 typical heads is over 58 inches. However, the average beam length of the bottom 10 is 55-1/2 inches—not much difference. If a bull appears able to "scratch his rear-end with his antlers," it likely has the frame to be a trophy. No need to spend much more time considering beam length.

INSIDE SPREAD—Boone and Crockett records show a wide variation on spreads of trophy elk. Interestingly, the narrowest head in the book outscores the widest, which should be enough to tell you that spread isn't everything. The top 10 typical entries range from 38-1/4 to 53 inches of inside spread for an average of 46-1/4 inches. The bottom 10 range from 38 to 49-1/2 inches for an average of 42-1/2 inches. Again, not a significant difference. In the field, simply look for a spread that stretches well outside the ears. This should indicate a spread somewhere in the low to mid-40s, and that's really all you need be concerned about.

MASS—Most really big elk have heavy antlers that carry good mass through the length of the main beam. However, mass is very hard to judge. It's unusual to have a lot of time to look at a big bull and mass is not where you should spend most of it. Just remember that very few elk considered "big" in the more visible characteristics have thin antlers. When hunting, quickly look for antlers that are visibly as large or larger in circumference than the ear bases, which are about 9 inches around. More importantly, the antlers should maintain that thickness to at least the fifth point.

TINE LENGTH—If you have time to study

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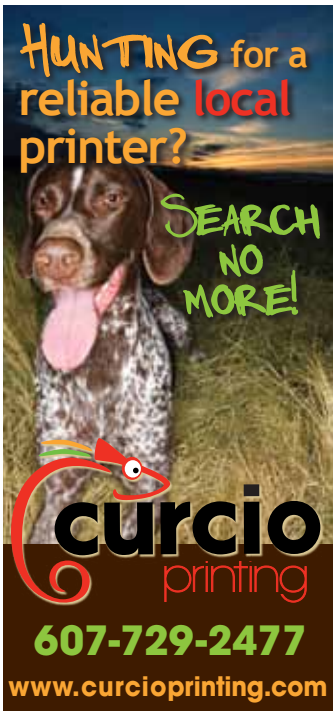


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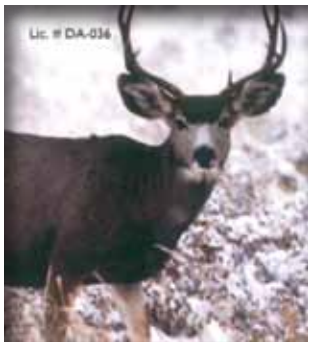
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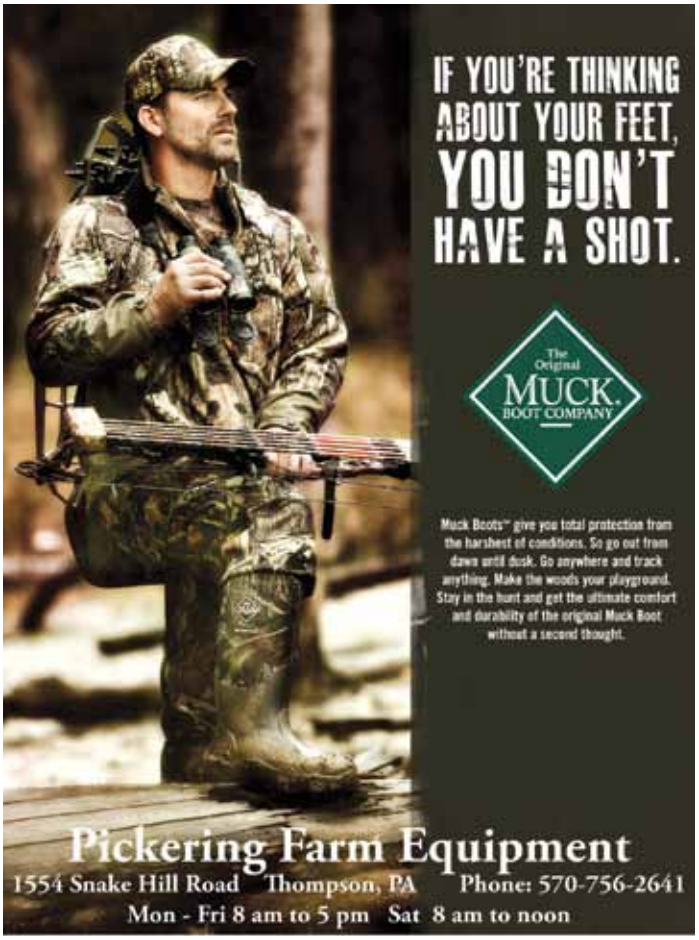
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Dave Tyler of Montrose, PA, harvested this massive bull on September 15th near Salmon, Idaho, near the Frank Church River of No Return Wilderness. He used a weather by 300 mag and was hunting with the Bighorn Outfitter.





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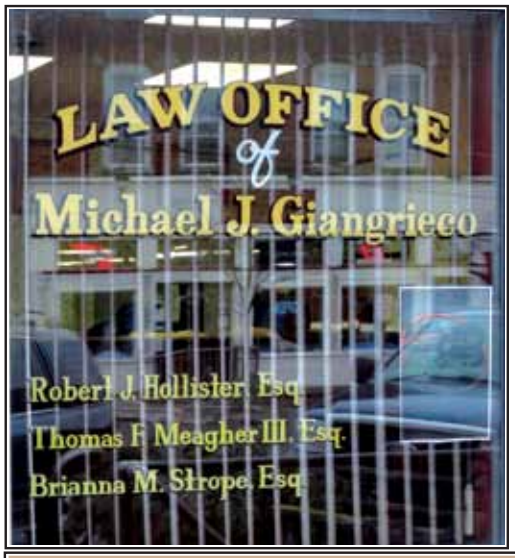


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Tips for Field Judging Elk continued from page 10

a bull, really look at the tines. Length of the points is the single most important trophy criteria. The good news is that point length is one of the easiest things to judge because there is a yardstick. On a big American elk, the distance from the burr of the antler to the tip of the nose is about 15-1/2 inches. Let's start at the bottom of the antlers and work up. A curved brow tine that appears to reach the end of the nose will be about 18 inches long. The next two points are usually shorter, but they still need to approach the burr-to-nose yardstick. Now comes the truth-teller, the dagger point. The dagger point is usually the longest point, and on a monster bull it will be half-again longer than the burr-to-nose yardstick, or even almost double that measurement. On a 6x6, the last point matters a lot. It has to be strong, at least 8 or 10 inches. This is less important if the bull is a 7x7, but you still need some inches in the top of the rack.

For a typical American elk, Boone and Crockett requires a minimum of 360 points to enter the Awards Book, and 375 points for entry into the All-time Records Book. For most bulls, inside spread is only 10-15 percent of its score. Mass is usually less than 20 percent. Beam length is worth close to 25 percent. This math means tine length accounts for about 40 percent of the score, sometimes more but rarely less.

So let's look through the spotting scope at a really good 6x6 American elk. Get your notebook out. The bull seems to have really long beams, almost scratching his rump. Estimate 55 inches on each side: 110 points. Spread is fairly wide but not noticeably splayed out. Figure 45 inches of inside spread: 45 points. Mass isn't huge, but pretty good. It starts at a normally heavy 9 inches and keeps it pretty well, maybe 30 inches of circumference on each antler: 60 points. So far, the bull is totaling 215.

Now let's work out the points. The brow tines curve nicely and seem to pass the tip of the nose, about 18 inches each: 36 points. The next two points are about 16 inches each on both sides: 64 points. The daggers are quite good, about half again longer than the burr-to-nose yardstick. Let's give them 22 inches each: 44 points. The back fork is also pretty good, about 8 inches on each side: 16 points.

Assuming both sides are equal, with no deductions for lack of symmetry, and you're looking at a bull that will score 375—a Boone and Crockett-class typical bull!

About the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation

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Senior students at DCMO BOCES in Masonville, NY, spent the first three weeks of the new school year constructing a food plot as part of their Conservation class. The students started with a 3-acre goldenrod meadow and bulldozed, leveled, disked and seeded a 1/2-acre food plot targeting use from white tailed deer. As the year progresses, students will monitor the food plot using trail cameras to determine which kinds of animals are using the food plot and how use changes from week to week through the fall season. Students will also build small enclosures placed in various areas to measure the amount of grazing on the food plot. All of the students involved worked very hard and finished with a fantastic product thanks to their dedication.

Submitted by Zach Whittaker







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Kip Adams, Director of Education and Outreach



Kip's Korner

Food plots are incredibly popular across the whitetail's range, but their proper preparation, planting and maintenance can get confusing very quickly. Even a discussion of commonly-planted species can leave food plotters scratching their heads. This Kip's Korner will clearly explain the main groups of food plot species and describe how they can be used in a food plot program.

Annuals are food plot species that complete their life cycle in a single year. They tend to germinate and grow very quickly, and they can provide several tons of forage per acre for numerous wildlife species. Popular annuals for whitetails include corn, soybeans, peas, brassicas, wheat, oats and some clovers such as crimson and arrowleaf. They provide high-quality forage, some provide cover, and depending on species, they can provide food for nearly every month of the year. For example, winter wheat and annual clovers planted in late summer and fall are some of the first species to green-up in the spring. This early food is crucial for does in the final stage of gestation, for bucks with developing antlers, and especially important for all deer following a hard winter. Soybeans and peas can feed deer all summer, corn and clover can feed them during fall, and then corn and brassicas can provide food all winter. High-quality year-round forage is possible, and using a diversity of annuals can pay huge dividends to the deer herd and your hunting opportunities.

Annuals, Perennials & Row Crops

Perennials on the other hand are food plot species that can live for several years. They germinate and grow slower than annuals because they spend more time initially developing their root system. However, once established, they'll provide forage for whitetails for a few to numerous years depending on the species. For example, red clover is listed as a biennial but often lasts for at least three years. White clover on the other hand is longer lived and can last for 5-7 years or more with proper maintenance. Popular perennials for whitetails include red clover, white clover, ladino clover, alfalfa, and chicory. Clovers are arguably the most commonly planted species for deer, and for good reason. Clovers are high in protein, highly digestible, highly preferred by deer, and there are varieties available that will grow in nearly every corner of the whitetail's range. Perennials are highly attractive, can provide forage from spring to fall, and should be a component of nearly all food plot programs.

Some food plots will contain a mix of annual and perennial species. The most common reasons for this strategy are to use the faster growing annual species as a "nurse" crop for the slower establishing perennials, or to extend the length of time the plot is providing forage for whitetails. Two popular mixes include using a cereal grain such as oats, wheat or rye as a nurse crop in a clover or clover/chicory planting. The cereal grain establishes quickly and provides forage for deer while the slower establishing clover and/or chicory develop their root systems. This is a great use of an annual to protect the perennials and also to minimize the amount of time the plot is unproductive for deer. Another example is to mix clover and brassicas. The brassicas protect the developing clover, but more importantly they can provide forage for months after the clover goes dormant in the fall.

Row crops are not different types of plants, rather they are species that are literally planted in rows, and the most popular row crops for deer are corn and soybeans (both annuals). These two species are planted in late spring after soil temperatures reach 55° for corn and 62° for soybeans, and they can provide tons of forage per acre for whitetails. Soybeans can feed deer all summer and into fall until the leaves and pods are fully consumed. Very, very few species are more preferred by whitetails than soybeans. Corn can provide food and cover during summer, fall and into winter until all the ears are consumed. Corn is high in energy, highly preferred by deer, and can be a great draw during deer season.

A food plot program should be designed to provide food for as close to year-round as possible. You accomplish this by planting some cool-season perennials such as clover and alfalfa, some cool-season annuals like oats or brassicas, and some warm-season annuals like corn and soybeans. None of these species can do it by themselves, but when used in combination with each other, the results can be outstanding. For information on row crops and other food plot species, visit www.QDMA.com.

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

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(L-R) MISSY SICKLER, PAUL TITUS, AND STEPHANY SCHULTZ

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— Youth Field Day —

On September 22nd, at the Harford Fair Grounds, the Susquehanna County Federation of Sportsmen hosted a special event for area youths. They were given the chance to spend the day learning and applying skills such as canoeing, trapping, muzzle loading, archery, rifle and shot gun shooting. Perhaps the most significant part of the day, pointed out to me by director Joe Morrison, was that the entire day included these youngsters being with their parents or grandparents. "How often do kids have the chance to spend quality time outdoors free from cell phones and computers?" Joe commented. Coordinator Cierra Greenwood made a special point to thank all of the organizations, clubs, and Cabot Oil for making this very special day possible. Lunch was provided by the very generous gift from Schneider's market. The day wrapped up with the Susquehanna Branch of Quality Whitetail Deer Management raffling off a .22 rifle which was won by Mike Wentz of Nicholson, PA.













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Establishing Thick Cover to Enhance Your Property

by Doug Little, NWTF Regional Biologist

If your property only includes mature woods and food plots, it's time to get nasty. Nasty thick cover, that is.

As forest stands mature, shade from large trees chokes out shrubs and other plants that offer secure habitat for nesting wild turkey hens, deer and other wildlife. Tree canopies can be like an umbrella preventing sunlight from reaching the forest floor during the growing season. This shading typically causes the ground cover to be reduced or eliminated through the natural process called forest succession.

Secure cover is just as important to wildlife as food. Humans don't enjoy walking through it, but nasty thick cover is guaranteed to make the wildlife on your property feel right at home.

To establish thick nesting/security cover, identify 3-5-acre areas on your property dominated by trees that are 4-8 inches in diameter. These small diameter trees are not merchantable yet and aren't thick enough to provide cover because of the full canopy shading out the forest floor. Using chainsaws, you can create nasty thick cover by cutting almost all of the trees in the 3-5-acre area.

Here is how you can create nasty thick cover on your land in a few simple steps:

❶ Schedule work on your property between September and March to avoid nesting season. In northern regions, scheduling your work during this time will allow deer to forage on the treetops after you cut the trees.

❷ Target flatter areas of your property with little-to-no slope to limit erosion potential.

❸ Plan to establish patches of nasty thick cover close to brood habitat to limit the distance poults travel to find insects after hatching. Deer also will use the new cover areas, so consider deer travel patterns to take them from the cover to food plots.

❹ Select trees you want to leave standing such as apple trees and other select mast producers. Mark "leave" trees with paint or flagging to avoid cutting them or dropping other trees on them.

❺ Survey the area for invasive plant species prior to cutting. Control invasive species using herbicides, chainsaws, etc., before you create the clearing to avoid having invasives take over once the area is exposed to total sunlight. It is important to identify the type of invasive species, and research the proper control methods before doing this work.



After you have cleared a 3-5-acre area, the rest is up to natural regeneration. Keep an eye out for invasive species after you create your clearing. It may take a couple years before the area is dominated by thick, woody vegetation, but the treetops left over from the clearing work will provide quality nesting cover for turkeys, grouse and plenty of other wildlife.

The downed treetops from your cutting work will provide turkey nesting cover in early April when some hens begin laying eggs. At least 50 percent of the ground cover should be exposed to allow woody vegetation to regenerate.

You may be tempted to remove the trees and tops that you cut down to make it look nice but remember: the nastier the better!

Once the clear-cut is created, plan on getting back into the area within five years to evaluate how many trees are starting to shade out the shrub cover. Forest succession can happen fast. It will be easier to remove trees as they appear rather than waiting for the area to be completely shaded out with trees again.

Finding Beatrice continued from page 6

party up the mountain. A medevac helicopter was brought in to aid in the search. The Red Cross set up a station to provide food and water

party up the mountain. A medevac helicopter was brought in to aid in the search. The Red Cross set up a station to provide food and water for the rescue teams. After hours of searching and finding some wildlife, including a bear, but no sign of Beatrice, the search was called off for the night. It did not look good for Beatrice.

Saturday morning three state police arrived at the house with a cadaver dog from Hershey. Again Dave would lead the search up the mountain, but after five days of extreme heat, did not look forward to what he might find. He and the troopers and dog spread out. After searching for a half hour or so Dave thought he heard something. Was it a dog he wondered? He couldn't be certain until he heard the noise again. It was very faint and distant but he was sure it was a human voice. He yelled to the troopers and when Officer Oliver reached Dave he was in disbelief when he too heard the faint voice calling out. Trooper Strauss reached Dave's position and the three of them started running toward the sound, yelling for her to keep calling out. Trooper Oliver reached the woman first and questioned her on her condition. Beatrice was alive! She had slipped and fell down under fallen tree branches that had her pinned and she could not move. From there rescue efforts to get Beatrice down the mountain ensued. The main problem was to find a way to safely get the injured woman down the mountainside. Dave phoned a friend, Scott, and asked if he would drive our tractor with a wagon attached to transport the ambulance crew and equipment up the mountain trail. Beatrice was in good spirits and everyone was ecstatic to find her alive and well. She was taken to the hospital via ambulance. She had suffered from dehydration and some minor bumps and bruises, but overall, after what she had just experienced, was okay.

It took the efforts of many people and truly was a miracle that events unfolded as they did and that a single photo on a trail camera led to finding Beatrice.



Caleb's Bear

by Randy Reynolds

It sometimes take years to fulfill a promise made, as did mine made to my nephew Caleb. He was five years old when I first took him with me on a spring turkey hunt.

It was a wonderful morning as the woods woke up. I had a chance to teach him how to use his ears as his eyes, and patience. The morning was unsuccessful as many hunts are but I told him someday we would go on a big game hunt.

Now 18, he had his choice of searched hunts. He chose Spring Black Bear hunt in Northern Quebec.

It was difficult planning just what week to go because we wanted to hunt the rut, and with a high school schedule filled with make-up days from flooding and snow it added some pressure.

Luckily the outfitter we chose wasn't booked full and we got what he felt would be the week of the rut, based on their weather and posted years.

When we got there we found a great camp and super nice weather and the bugs (thank God for therma cells).

I'm sure Caleb didn't know what to expect as we headed out that first afternoon to our seperate bait sites. Later that night he said when that first bear came out he got so excited he couldn't stop shaking and didn't get the shot off he wanted. As the hunt went on he got another chance and made a great shot with his bow. He harvested a 230lb sow that turned out to be 20 years old and infertile, as she had never had a litter of cubs (a good one to remove).

Our crew was 3 for 5 – all had shots but me. We are planning the same trip next spring.

Fulfilling my promise to Caleb was very important to me, well worth the planning, travel, and expense even though I didn't see a bear. We all had a fantastic time!



RANDY (LEFT) CONGRATULATES HIS NEPHEW CALEB.

A few of Jerry Rusek's friends show up to enjoy newly planted Buck Forage oats, clover and chicory...



Fishing Trip to Lake Ontario

I always think of the rocks in my head when Dave Sienko organizes a fishing trip to Lake Ontario and we agree to meet at McDonald's in Great Bend at 2:30 am. It's a three hour drive to Pulaski from home and Captain George Haskins wants us to be on board the "Good Times" at 5:30 am. George does his scouting of the lake and does his utmost to make a fishing trip successful.

Five of us adult children – Dave Sienko, Bill Pencek, Adam Uncapher, Bob Hobbes and I – enjoyed the conversation and early morning car ride to head north and fish for King salmon.

Adam caught the first King before the sun had a chance to fully rise. The sun rising on Lake Ontario, by the way, is always an example of God's use of color in His glorious artwork!

I wish I could keep track of how much time we spent catching fish vs. how much time we spent laughing. Without a doubt, laughing on Lake Ontario with these guys is a therapeutic blessing; however, we did catch a lot of fish as well. The total number of salmon we caught was twelve and the estimated weight of our catch was well over 200 lbs.



BOB MUNGER AND HIS WIFE VIRGINIA ARE FROM THE HONESDALE AREA, AND ARE THE RECIPIENTS OF THE 2012 QDMA'S GOOD TIMES SPORTFISHING CERTIFICATE. BOB AND HIS WIFE CAUGHT THEIR LIMIT OF KING SALMON. CONGRATULATIONS, BOB AND VIRGINIA!

When we arrived back at the dock, we were greeted by a team of folks who wanted to collect data from our catch. They took scale samples and determined how many salmon were hatchery-raised and how many were native. I was very surprised to find that over 60% of the salmon were native. All of our salmon were very fat and healthy. The condition of our catch was also enabling the fish biologist to determine if the salmon had the food source to sustain their numbers. It was obvious they did. The number of Fingerlings to be introduced into the Ontario Fishery was also determined by the condition of the salmon and the ratio of stocked vs. native fish.

Data collected on available food source, habitat, and population is imperative to any successful wildlife management program. As you can see, the people managing Lake Ontario seem to be doing a great job!







Co-operative Feed Dealer's Trade Show

Morgan Butler, co-owner of Buck Forage Products, made the 20+-hour trek to the Veterans Memorial Arena in Binghamton, NY, to be part of the Co-operative Feed Dealer's (CFD) trade show. Hauling our huge barn board display, a 40-inch television, a year's supply of literature and Dr. Kroll's deer management DVDs in a pickup truck and utility trailer, Morgan made good on his commitment to make CFD's show successful.

The trade show is always a success but only through the exhaustive efforts of the whole CFD crew. It's always great to speak to folks from all over the country who are other parts of the vendor and displayer force or CFD customers who are looking for bargains to pass on to their clientele.

Several friends who attended the trade show, including Ray Reeves and family, made the comment to me that they never realized what a huge selection of products were available to his sporting goods store (Lock N' Load of Owego, NY) through CFD and at the best prices he had ever seen. Food plot products, Muck Boots, trail cameras, deer nutrients and attractants, camouflage clothing, blinds, traps, and more, were all available to fill his store's shelves for the busy autumn market.

If you are part of a retail store and qualify to be a Co-operative Feed Dealer customer, you may be interested in contacting CFD at 800-333-0895 or let me know and I can steer you to a representative in your area. And remember, this newsletter is available on CFD's website, www.co-opfeed.com.















Pattern Deer Like a Biologist

By Jim Stickles, Associate Wildlife Biologist ®

I'm going to share with you one of the most valuable tools you can add to your hunting arsenal this year, and it's FREE! Biggamelogic.com (BGL) is best described as a mapping program, hunting journal, data organizer, and social network all rolled into one package. Though it sounds complex, the website is actually pretty "user friendly." BGL basically gives hunters the same tools that biologists use to create basic home range maps and sort through data to discover important patterns. As a hunter with a strong background in biology, I recognize that such tools are EXTREMELY valuable for hunters!

For example, if you want to pattern a specific buck, you can use BGL to record all of your observations of that animal (trail camera photos, personal sightings, etc.) and the website will produce a basic home range map.

Great! Now you know the different portions of the property the deer uses. So how do you put yourself in position for a shot? Using BGL's searching tools and some basic knowledge of deer behavior, you can get a better idea of where to locate your stand.

With the exception of the rut, bucks are generally bedded down throughout the middle of the day. If you know where a buck is bedded during the day, you can sneak into position in the early afternoon while he is bedded, and hopefully intercept him on his way to a food source in the evening. Assuming that mid-day observations occur within or nearby bedding areas, you can use the BGL searching tool to filter through all of the observations of the buck and map just the mid-afternoon observations so you can get a better idea of where his bedding area is located. After mapping the likely bedding area, you can use a similar search to map the deer's evening feeding area.

Once feeding and bedding areas are known, you can plan for the wind and select a stand location in a travel corridor between his bedding area and food source. Pretty cool, huh? I think so!

BGL also just recently released a low cost App for smart phones which uses the GPS component of your phone so you can add data to your BGL map directly from the field! So for $4.99, you can basically turn your smart phone into a GPS unit and mark stand locations, deer sign, food sources, sightings, etc.! This is not only a "MUST HAVE!" app for sportsmen, but it is also useful for a wide range of outdoor enthusiasts and wildlife professionals. In the upcoming months, I will be working with BGL's web designers to help fine-tune the website and further illustrate the many uses of the app and website. BGL is probably the most useful thing to hit the outdoor community since the trail camera, so check it out and add it to your hunting arsenal this year!



Big Game Logic uses "heat mapping" to transform trail camera and field observation data into a basic home range map. The colors white and red indicate "hot spots" of activity.



Big Game Logic's searching tools sorts through data allowing users to better pattern deer. Here I searched for all locations from 10AM-2PM for a notable deer called "Trophy 10."

Citizen Science: Epizootic Hemorrhagic Disease (EHD)

By Jim Stickles,
Associate Wildlife Biologist®

As a biologist, I recognized the potential for Big Game Logic (BGL) to be used for a wide range of scientific uses where data could be collected by sportsmen and reported through the BGL website in the form of GPS coordinates. The heat maps produced by BGL provide a great visual tool for communicating important information.



Research deer found dead along a stream as the result of a localized EHD outbreak. A live deer with EHD was found later in the day and put down by the local DNR officer.

This year was a particularly bad year for Epizootic Hemorrhagic Disease (EHD) in white-tailed deer. EHD is one of the most significant diseases that affect deer on a yearly basis. Outbreaks of EHD can be very localized and very severe. More importantly, EHD is typically a late summer disease. Usually, by the time it is recognized as a significant problem, wildlife agencies have already allocated doe tags, and the most they can do to prevent an overharvest is warn hunters to be more conservative with their doe harvest. Unfortunately, there is nothing we can do to prevent EHD, and treating sick deer is neither practical nor feasible. The most wildlife managers and hunters can do to ensure an overharvest of local herds does not occur is monitor EHD outbreaks, and adjust doe harvests accordingly. Big Game Logic allows hunters, wildlife biologists, and government wildlife and disease agencies to work together to collect the data that we need to be more proactive rather than reactive in regard to deer herd management.

In an effort to track EHD in a more precise manner, I started a camp on BGL called "Citizen Science: 2012 Epizootic Hemorrhagic Disease (EHD) Tracker." It is a public camp, and I encourage anyone who has made observations of deer killed as a result of EHD to report those observations so we can all have better information as to where it has struck this year. Please only report a deer if EHD was confirmed or highly suspected due to a late summer death in close proximity to water. For more information on the causes, symptoms, and management implications of EHD, please see the links below by the Quality Deer Management Association and Dr. Grant Woods.



2012 EHD Tracker map with recorded observations of EHD in North Georgia.

For more information on the causes, symptoms, and management implications of EHD:

http://www.qdma.com/articles/know-the-signs-of-hd-hemorrhagic-disease
http://www.growingdeer.tv/#/death-of-a-hit-list-buck
http://www.growingdeer.tv/#/whitetail-management-ehd-hits-home
http://www.growingdeer.tv/view/wp-content/uploads/2012/07/Epizootic-Hemorrhagic-Disease-Fact-Sheet.pdf
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