Intensive Trophy Management Comes to Ontario

By Dr. James C. Kroll

I have a confession to make. Until this year, I had never harvested a trophy buck from a high fenced area. To be frank, it is not because I have something against high fences, rather it just never worked out that way.

I have harvested countless management and so-called "cull" bucks behind fences as part of trophy management programs around the country, but never a trophy.

Recently, new regulations and legislation proposed by the Texas Parks & Wildlife Department and other state agencies have produced a minor controversy about the ethical and biological soundness of fencing deer. Our studies indicate there is no reason for concern at the biological level. However, the most vocal critics do, I feel, have legitimate concerns. Unfortunately, however, many of the critics reduce the arguments to a rich guy versus poor guy level.

We conducted a detailed study a few years back about why landowners build high fences in the first place. The number one reason was "self defense."

(continued on page 27)

Intensive Trophy Management Comes To Ontario

(continued from page 24)

Even the Texas Parks & Wildlife Department admitted they surrounded the Kerr Wildlife Area with a high fence to protect the herd from abuses perpetrated by their neighbors. Nothing is more exasperating than to put all the effort into protecting young bucks, then have them cross a property line and end up in the back of a neighbors truck!

The northeastern U.S. is not known for quality bucks - eastern Canada enjoys even less of the limelight. In the late 1970s I hunted Anticosti Island in the Gulf of St. Lawrence. The Island comprises several million acres and was stocked with a handful of deer at the turn of the century.

For a brief period, Anticosti gained fame as the only place in the northeast where a hunter could legally harvest two bucks in a season and afforded a legitimate opportunity at a trophy-class buck. Unfortunately, however, Canadian policy and greedy operators led to a deterioration in quality for the herd. You still can harvest two bucks, but true trophies are rare.

I have hunted Canada's provinces for almost 20 years, beginning with Anticosti and New Brunswick and later moving to western Canada (Alberta). In the process, I have had some great hunting experiences in the frigid climate of the Great North Woods; and I also have had some notable disappointments, particularly in the east. In the 1996 season, I spent a week at a frightening -25F on a tripod, finally rattling in and harvesting a nice mature buck. My outfitter was Alberta Wilderness Guide Service, with guide Dave Bzawy. I have hunted with Dave for a decade now and together we have harvested some pretty good bucks.

I had pretty well written off eastern Canada. Why? As I noted above, hunting pressure in the east is horrendous and there are few quality bucks for the taking. Hunting methods are not exactly what I would call ethical by my standards. They either hunt from vehicles or, in the case of Ontario, use dogs. So, you can see why there was some trepidation when my friend Lee Taylor asked me if I would like to go on a hunt in Ontario. The name of the operation is Canadian Whitetails and it is operated as a consortium by Jeff Wolfe, Ed Bishop and some other experienced Ontario whitetailers. They are high-fencing property in central Ontario, right in the middle of the North Woods and surrounded by heavy hunting pressure. Since, 1) I had never had the opportunity to hunt with Lee; 2) we would be videotaping for a future Texas Trophy Hunters television program; and, 3) I wanted to see first hand what was going on with intensive trophy management there, I decided to go. Besides, that would be a good prelude to one of my western Canadian hunts.

I was picked up a the Toronto Airport by one of the members of the consortium. It was 11:30 p.m. and , in typical Canadian fashion, it was cold and snowing. We headed north. At 2:30 a.m., blinding snow and fatigue forced us to find a motel. By morning the snow had stopped, the roads had been plowed and we continued our trip. Lee had arrived a day earlier and I hoped we would have a nice buck to photograph by the time I arrived. After all, this was an intensively managed, fenced operation. On arriving, I learned Lee had not as yet seen a buck!

It seems the deer failed to recognize they were high-fenced! I should have known better from my many experiences trying to remove deer from fenced properties.

Long ago, I learned the Canadians and northern U.S. hunters have an advantage on us southerners - the snow. Heavy snow makes for easy

(continued on next page)

Cougar Run Ranch

EXOTIC HUNTING
•Archery • Pistol • Rifle

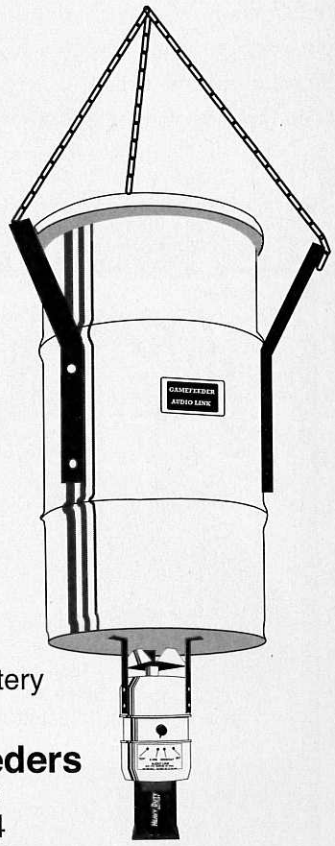
WILD HOG HUNTING
•Enclosed Rifle Stands
•Archery Stands • Feeders
Also Available
• AXIS • SIKA • FALLOW DEER
•AOUDAD • RAMS • ETC

Special Note:
2 SEPARATE HUNTING RANCHES
#1 is Archery only w/Hogs, Rams & Deer (UNGUIDED)
#2 is Archery—Rifle—Pistol (GUIDED) w/Hogs, Rams & Deer

Private Hunting Preserve-45 Minutes from Downtown Houston

(281) 354-9339

$105.00
Spring Special



1. 100# capacity
2. Hanging harness included
3. Game Feeder I timer
4. Feed once or twice daily
5. Set first feed of the day at any time
6. Optional second feeding 9 hours later
7. Run time adjustable 1 to 10 seconds
8. Powered by single 6 v. springtop lantern battery
9. Price includes delivery

Audio Link Game Feeders
3141 Waterloo Circle
Edmond, OK 73034
1-800-330-0017
Offer good through June 1, 1998.

Intensive Trophy Management Comes To Ontario

(continued from previous page)

tracking. This permits patterning of deer which traditionally are quite migratory (as opposed to our race of whitetails). They tend to shift from one feeding area to another without any obvious cue. I also have seen this somewhat with southern deer, but it is not as easily detectable. Northern deer also tend to behave much differently in cold than our subspecies. While Texas deer tend to become less active with cold weather, northern races tend to increase their activity at these severe temperatures. Southern deer "know" things will eventually get better, so they tend to hold up until they do. Northern deer, on the other hand, "reason" things are not going to get any better until spring, so they have to make the best of the situation. In addition, they have to keep moving to find food and generate body heat.

So, if it was cold and there was plenty of snow, I logically reasoned it would be a piece of cake to harvest a buck. Unfortunately, however, I also have pointed out on numerous occasions moon phase greatly influences the amount of daytime activity. Greater nocturnal activity occurs on the full moon; the time Lee and I were in Ontario. So, things would be working against us.

I met up with Lee at the lodge, overlooking a beautiful North Woods lake filled with smallmouth bass, pike and catfish. Jeff is a former restaurant owner and a pretty good cook. We each had our own room and the spacious lodge provided the kind of North Woods atmosphere you expect for that region. The food was excellent.



James Kroll photo

Lee Taylor with his 22" double drop Canadian Whitetail 164 B&C.

Because of the full moon and pre-rut timing, the bucks just were not moving. Search as we would, we could not find an active trail, despite the deep snow. Clearly, the bucks were bedded up in their sanctuaries preparing for the rut. We found one such sanctuary on a little island in a deep swamp. The large amount of pellets and recently used beds indicated we had found the place where one or more big bucks were hiding. The trick was to figure out how to get to them. The ice was not fully frozen in the swamp and it made for some really treacherous stalking. Try as we may, we just could not make headway with these bucks. We decided to take another approach.

One of the techniques we used was what I call a "silent drive." One to three individuals slip into an area and walk slowly and quietly with the wind into an area where a bedded buck is suspected. The hunter sits up along a travel corridor to ambush the escaping buck. Good plan, but it didn't work! On one occasion, we saw a buck slipping through the spruce drainages. You know I am a firm believer that whitetails - no matter where they live - are streamside animals. Doe groups tend to be associated with drainages; moving outward

(continued on page 30)

KETCHUM MOUNTAIN LODGE



183+
Taken by
Ranch Foreman

Irion County, Mertzon, Texas

13000 Acres of Wildlife Management

(With No Livestock and No High Fence)







- Year - round Nutritional Feeding Program
- 4 Day Fully Guided Hunts - With Meals and Lodging
- 1 to 1.3 Buck to Doe Ratio - 1 Deer per 20 Ac.
- No More than 10 Hunters (usually 8) Per Hunt.
- Hunts starting at $2500 Bow, $2900 Gun, $700 Spring Turkey.
- *Now Booking 1997 and 1998 seasons.*

For Information Contact

Rick Adley (817) 656-1200 or Robert Andrews (915) 949-0526

Mail or Fax to: 7312 Luther Ct. N. Richland Hills, Texas 76180 Fax (817) 656-1312

(continued from page 28)

to forage on upland vegetation during spring and early summer, then retreating to the streamside areas in drier times. Bucks use drainages as travel corridors to move from one doe group to the next. They also tend to funnel through saddles, which are topographic features connecting one drainage to another.

Shortly after noon, we located an area along the ridge I knew had to be a perfect afternoon bedding spot for a big buck. It had a southern exposure and provided easy escape on approach. We eased into position with the wind in our favor. I whispered: "This is just about the most perfect buck bedding spot I have seen." No sooner had the words invaded the freezing Canadian air, a monster buck jumped up from below us and ran along the saddle.

The buck had been no more than 20 yards away when we jumped him. Weaving through the dense poplar, the buck did not present much of a target and was putting distance between us. I followed his path through the scope of my 7mm Rem. Mag. Jarrett, hoping for an opening. Out of the corner of my left eye, I could see a small clearing the buck would have to cross. I kept the crosshairs on his chest, hoping he would not change his escape route. He made it to the clearing.

I wanted to see first hand what was going on with intensive trophy management in Ontario.

There always is something frightening about the roar of a high-powered rifle in the North Woods. I guess it's the snow and the thick silence. But, the blast from the Jarrett seemed to erupt like a "smart bomb" on an Iraqi bunker! The 145 grain Nosler ballistic tip caught the buck right in the heart. Although mortally wounded, the 300+ pound animal seemed to take the entire force of the bullet in stride. He stumbled a bit, then ran into the thick forest. Silence reigned.

About 50 yards from the clearing lay my buck, a massive eight point main frame monster. Although I have harvested many Canadian bucks in my career, I never cease to be amazed at the enormity of these animals. They look like a yearling steer laying there in the snow.

The buck measured in a whopping 164-5/8 inches Boone and Crockett; not bad for an eight-pointer. With long beams and great mass, the buck will make a fine addition to my trophy room.

Now it was time to hunt with my buddy Lee Taylor. I'm pretty particular about my hunting partners, and I must say I was impressed with his skill and abilities. He not only is a good hunter, but also a pretty fair rifleman.

Once we figured out what the bucks were doing, we quickly organized a plan of attack. My buck had been bedded up on a ridge slope overlooking a drainage. It made sense other bucks would be doing the same thing. One of these ridges overlooked a particularly nasty swamp typical of the North Woods.

It made sense to us a buck would not bed down in one of these swamps, but would keep one near for escape. So, we organized a plan in which two men would slip with the wind up over the back side of a ridge and hopefully push a buck downhill toward the swamp. Lee and I would be in ambush along the travel corridor leading into the swamp.

The plan worked like a charm. Through my binoculars, I could see a huge deer suddenly dart along the ridge some 75 to 100 feet above us. As planned. he worked his way down the slope toward the swamp. That's when things did not go as planned. The buck used the topography like a master! He slipped into a shallow drainage, completely out of our sight. Lee moved quickly toward this area. If he emerged in sight, he would disappear quickly into the thick swamp. Suddenly, there he was! Trotting through the dense understory of the swamp's edge. I could not see how Lee ever would get a shot. Lee once again adjusted his position and shouldered his rifle.

At first, I thought the shot had missed. After all, that was a low probability shot if I ever saw one. We ran along the ridge to intercept the buck before he made it to the swamp. Finding a vantage point, we waited. But, no buck appeared. Below, we could see Jeff working his way along the swamp's edge. "Here he is," Jeff yelled. The trophy had simply run out of steam and lay across a spruce log. What an incredible sight. He had massive, palmated antlers with unique droptines. The last H measurement was a whopping seven inches! The buck scored in at about the same mid-160s range as my buck. After a great deal of frustration, we both had scored on monster bucks. It was an incredible hunt and one I'll long remember.

Jeff and Ed are managing their property for high quality experiences as well as trophy bucks. As far as I'm concerned, it's not the fence, it's the quality of the hunt. Over the next few years, we will have to sort out our feelings and concerns about intensive management of whitetails. Believe me, I do not have the answers to many questions in my own mind. Clearly someone needs to formulate the "rules" for modern deer hunting. It's far more complicated, however, than the rich guys vs. the poor! In the meantime, I plan on savoring my days in the Great North Woods with my pals Lee and Dave; two men I'm proud to call hunting buddies.

Editor's Note: Ed Bishop and Jeff Wolfe operate three hunting ranches across Canada. To hunt trophy whitetail, elk, bighorn, Dall and Stone Sheep, bison, exotics and Canadian geese in Quebec, Ontario or Saskatchewan call them at 519-875-4873 or 519 688-0653.

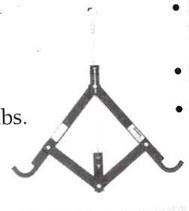
Easy as 1,2,3

Get One Today!

K-1 GAMBREL
Sturdy, Adjustable, Easy to Use Guaranteed!



- Heavy Duty
- Weight Activated
- Up to 600 lbs. Capacity



- Folds for Easy Storage
- Steel Cable
- Patent Pending



Deer Stand



- 14' 6" Eye Level
- Adjustable Gun Rest
- Sturdy Ladder for Easy Climbing
- Longest single piece under 6'
- Weighs 160 lbs.
- Offset Seating for Maximum Room
- Can be Set Up or Taken Down in 20 min. or Less

Deer Feeder



- No Ladder Needed
- Winch Elevated w/Auto Brake
- Stationary Rainproof Cap
- 7' 6" Under Drum
- Spin-Cast Mark 2 Electronics
- One Person Set Up
- Internal Funnel
- 55 gallon Drum
- Collapsible under 6'
- Patent Pending



K1 HUNTING PRODUCTS • 2305 North Richmond Rd • Wharton, Texas 77488
(409) 532-5161 • Fax (409) 532-4176

HUNTERS EXTRAVAGANZA

1998 Show Dates

San Antonio .....August 7-9
Houston .....August 14-16
Fort Worth .....August 21-23

dc shredding co.

ATTENTION South Texas Hunting Camps

Shredding around campsites and old or new senderos

Shred today so you can see those BIG bucks this season!

PO Box 4875
Corpus Christi, Texas 78469
Call Tommy Hallick for appt. **512-394-5187** mobile **512-813-0599**



YOU CAN GO ON A RAM HUNT FOR ONLY $150!

This includes 1 1/2 days of hunting and 2 nights lodging. We have a 98% success rate and 20% of rams taken make the record book. References available on request. Hunts conducted year around. God bless you.

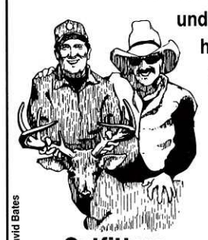
THOMPSON TEMPLE'S TEXAS WILDLIFE
(830) 367-5069 P.O. Box 498 Ingram, TX 78025

LIABILITY INSURANCE

Bartlett, Baggett and Shands Agency understands your special insurance needs. We have liability insurance programs designed specifically for you !

Affordable Pricing • Varied Coverage Options
"A" Rated Carriers • No Obligation Quotations
Contact us today!
Toll Free (800) 324-8452 Fax (409) 632-1125

Ben Bartlett
Bartlett, Baggett & Shands Insurance Agency
P.O. Box 9 • Lufkin, TX 75901



Outfitters



Hunting Clubs

Art by David Bates