

Montana

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September 2013

News



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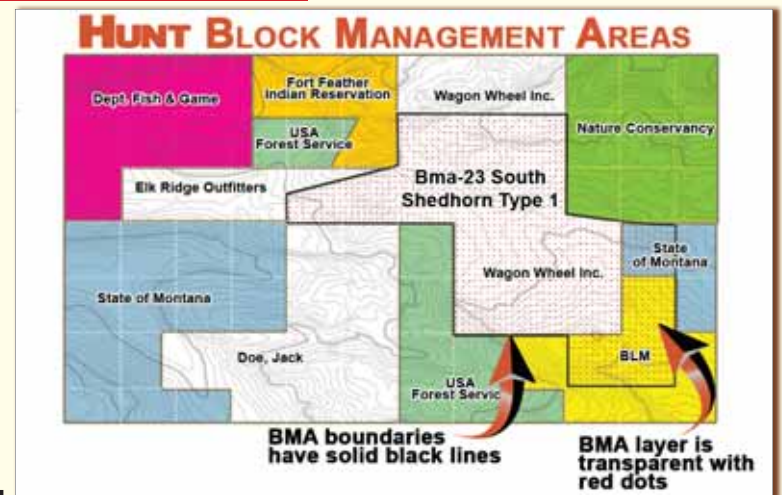
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'BLOCK MANAGEMENT AREAS FOR MONTANA' NOW AVAILABLE FROM HUNTING GPS MAPS



Hunting GPS Maps is excited to announce the inclusion of the 2013 Montana Block Management Areas (BMAs) on our HUNT GPS, Google Earth, and App for iOS devices. **Hunters in Montana will find this to be a valuable tool for locating, accessing, and utilizing properties enrolled in the BMA program.**

The Block Management program started in 1985 and has grown into a very popular program for increasing hunting access across Montana. Basically, private land owners can enroll their property in the program and get compensated from MT Fish Wildlife and Parks. In 2012 over 8 million acres of private land was enrolled in the program to provide additional hunting opportunities to both resident and nonresident hunters. The addition of the Block Management Area boundaries by Hunting GPS Maps will help hunters find and obey the rules and property boundaries for each area. Typically paper maps of each area are available at sign in boxes and FWP offices. At times hunters can find these maps difficult to use and navigate, especially if the property boundary signs for the area have been removed or fallen down as the season progresses. With the addition of the BMAs onto a digital map for GPS hunters will be able to:

- Easily locate Block Management Areas
- Locate property lines while out in the field on your GPS.
- Find new BMA areas while out in the field.
- Easily stay off surrounding private land not open to public hunting.
- Reference Type I (walk-in areas) and Type II (written permission) BMA areas on your GPS.

"We are committed to constantly updating, generating new features, and including new tools on our maps," says Eric Siegfried, founder at Hunting GPS Maps. "The inclusion of the BMAs [on our maps] will lead to less confusion in the field and more opportunities for hunters; which is part of our company's mission. We have spent many hours with the Montana FWP working towards a good option for providing this information. We're confident that the BMA layer in conjunction with our land ownership layer will enable hunters in Montana the ability to more quickly and effectively access the details of each property across the state."

The Block Management Areas will be included as a standard feature on the Montana map. Customers can get this layer in a couple different ways:

- New customers can purchase a HUNT Montana GPS Chip with the Block Management Areas at their local retailer. Each customer should register their Chip at www.huntinggpsmaps.com to ensure they have the most current map available with BMAs.

- Current customers can purchase an update card through their local retailer that is redeemable at our website. A simple computer based update will add the BMA layer to their existing map.

- The BMA areas will also be available through the new HUNT App for iOS and HUNT Google Earth maps. Both maps were released earlier this summer.

Visit www.huntinggpsmaps.com for more info on these maps and the BMA layers. ♦



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For more outdoor safety tips, please contact NorthWestern Energy at (888) 467-2669 or visit NorthWesternEnergy.com.



Nashua-Area Fence Removal Project Helps Migrating Pronghorns^{MFWP}

A dangerous chokepoint that migrating antelope encountered each year just west of Nashua now has one less hazard the animals will have to contend with. Old woven-wire and barbed wire fencing strung for about a mile along U.S. Highway 2 has long served as a potential barrier for pronghorn and other wildlife trying to cross the busy road and get over an adjacent set of Burlington Northern-Santa Fe train tracks. In fact, ground on both sides of the old fence -- which was removed by a Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks Region 6 crew and others on Aug. 11 and 12 -- is littered with skulls and skeletons of all sizes of antelope that didn't make it through the man-made gauntlet.

Instead of jumping fences, most pronghorn prefer to go under them whenever they can. But that's not possible with sheep-style fencing that has heavy-gauge wire panels right to the ground.

"Recent research conducted by Andrew Jakes, in cooperation with FWP, shows that migrating pronghorn are prone to being delayed in specific locations -- usually by fence lines -- during their migration," said FWP Glasgow-area biologist Drew Henry. "We especially saw that during the harsh winter of 2010-11, when hundreds of pronghorn died across Region 6 because of impassable fences, deep snowdrifts, and getting hit by cars, trucks and trains." Henry said the Nashua location was identified through that research, and also by travelers along Highway 2, where the halted antelope were often forced to stage. "We're trying to do whatever we can to clear away obstructions so pronghorn don't waste costly days during their annual migrations," Henry explained.

The property where the old fencing was removed is owned by Valley County, Jim Strodbeck and Jason Sauer, who gave their permission to proceed with the project. The FWP crew was assisted by Glasgow-area residents Darvin Henry, Bob Kemp Jr., and Andrew McKean and his son, Merlin, as well as Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation employees Matt Poole and Marc Kloker.

EHD Possible Again in Central Montana Whitetails^{MFWP}

Dead white-tailed deer, possibly killed by epizootic hemorrhagic disease, or EHD, have been reported in north central Montana, state wildlife officials say.

Dead and dying whitetails have been spotted from the Great Falls area to Simms on the Sun River north to the Marias River and even north of Chester. While the number of dead deer is not clear it appears to be at least dozens, based on people calling about finding dead whitetails.

EHD is spread among deer, primarily whitetails, by biting midges. It is one of several hemorrhagic disease viruses found in wild and domestic ruminants.

A related disease, bluetongue virus, affects domestic livestock. While EHD can also infect livestock, it has not been proven to spread from deer to livestock or vice versa. The disease poses no threat to humans. High density deer herds may have higher mortality rates; however, the relationship of deer density to the severity of EHD is not clear cut.

Spread of the disease normally stops when the first frost of autumn kills the offending midges.

For more scientific information about EHD, go to <http://www.uga.edu/scwds/HD.pdf> and type EHD in the search bar. ♦

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STRATEGIES FOR EARLY ARCHERY ELK

By Mark Kayser

Even though mature bulls may be self-sidelined in the pre-rut, they practice the steps leading up to the rutting green light. After rising from a day of bedding, mature bulls often take out aggression on nearby saplings and spar with shrubbery to strengthen neck muscles. Rubs, particularly large ones on trees with diameters exceeding two feet and raked barkless, are unmistakable indicators of mature bulls in the area.

Strategies for the archery elk opener and the first half of the season differ from peak-rut bowhunts for the same bulls. Why? Most archery elk seasons open prior to the raging rut and although bulls have begun to engage in the traditions of the breeding season, they haven't whipped themselves into a mud-sprayed frenzy.

Tailor your tactics to their pre-rut demeanor and you'll find the bulls more cooperative this September.

WHAT'S ON A BULL'S MIND Mature bulls begin disbanding from summer bachelor groups as they strip their velvet in conjunction with rising testosterone levels in the bull's body. Although a bull's fuel pump is topping off its system with testosterone, it's the young bulls that foolishly waste their energy early. Mature bulls shelve their enthusiasm for when the time is right. They understand that wasted energy early means lost breeding opportunities when the time is right.

So what are these mature bulls doing if they can't be found inside the security of a herd of cows? They are waiting patiently and biding their time eating, resting and preparing for the upcoming breeding Olympics.

Even though mature bulls may be self-sidelined in the pre-rut, they practice the steps leading up to the rutting green light. After rising from a day of bedding, mature bulls often take out aggression on nearby saplings and spar with shrubbery to strengthen neck muscles. Rubs, particularly large ones on trees with diameters exceeding two feet and raked barkless, are unmistakable indicators of mature bulls in the area.

Also pay close attention to water sources, particularly those with shallow muddy edges. Mature bulls may not be in charge of a herd, but they still enjoy a good wallow in the mud. Bulls prefer muddy edges to wallow, but over the years I have watched many a bull walk into belly-deep water and aggressively wallow without the mud-slinging so often described as a "must-have" for wallowing.

Why do bulls wallow? Elk thrash muddy areas, urinate in the mud, then roll in it and plaster their bodies with the concoction. Most biologists believe elk wallow to cake themselves in scent and carry it along like a walking, smelly billboard. Think of it as a whitetail scrape that goes wherever the bull goes.

AMBUSH HOTSPOTS Yep, you guessed it. Like hunting whitetails you need to focus on food, water, bedding cover and travel routes to ambush a big bull in the opening days of the archery season. Odds are high you won't just fall into these hotspots so be sure to add scouting days into your early-season hunt.



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FOOD A few lucky bowhunters get to hunt bulls over whitetail-style food plots, but for the most part you and I have to locate natural food sources that attract bulls. If you have agriculture in your region, focus on those areas. Elk are grazers so alfalfa, winter wheat, small grains and other silage crops may attract big bulls with a finer taste for choice foods. In wilderness settings, focus on lush meadows with a variety of grasses and forbs. If it's been a dry year elk may switch to shrubs and trees early to pad their diet, but they generally don't focus on these foods until winter forces them to switch over to browsing.

Although it's tempting to set up right at the feeding site, you may want to move your ambush away from the food source. This way, if you do bump the elk en route, they may continue to feed at the location, but simply use a different route to get to the food.

TRAVEL ROUTES/BEDDING COVER Elk have no qualms about vertical ascents or wearing down their hooves while trekking over rocky terrain. Yet, when possible, they look for the route of least resistance preferring gradual slopes, saddles and well-beaten paths over brush-busting trots.

Big bulls carrying a summer's gut from the green bounty will forsake jumping a fence if a low spot or loose wire gives them a less strenuous crossing. Open gates leading to and from water, or feed also are quick to lure elk through their trouble-free breaches.

Well-beaten paths offer a clue to an elk travel route. Be sure to brush up on the difference between elk and cattle tracks. It's common for the two to intermingle, especially at water and feeding areas and it can be difficult, if not impossible, to distinguish the two. Adult cow tracks are large and blocky, and quite distinct, but livestock calves leave a track that is very similar to that of adult elk. If you find yourself in this situation, look for other tracks and search for fresh elk droppings or cow pies.

WATER I believe water to be the best ambush location for mature bulls. Elk require water daily and during the pre-rut they will water several times depending on their daily travel routine or extreme daytime temperatures. They also visit water holes to wallow and as the rut heats up a water hole can be a hotspot any time of the day.

Plus, you can use water and wallow locations to set up a trailside trap. Scout for the trail being used the most and set up a treestand or impromptu ground blind to waylay a water-bound bull.

CALLING STRATEGIES Calling in the early season for mature bulls can be effective if orchestrated correctly. It's not that mature bulls won't answer a cow or bull call; it's just that they generally won't come to the call. Still, the responding answer may be all you need to put you within shooting distance or complete an ambush plan for later.

A solid strategy is to sound like a small band of cows with a nonaggressive bull in the lead. Don't overcall, but use calls to spur a big bull into giving away his location.

When you hear that, it's time to decide if you should plan an ambush or continue still-hunting for a face-to-face meeting with an opener bull. Regardless of the choice, you have the proof to make your early-season hunt a success.

Early season may not have all of the hoopla of hunting the raging rut, but it still offers plenty of opportunities to tag a mature bull. To keep up with Mark Kayser & new hunting tips: www.markkayser.com

Mark Kayser with a bull that wouldn't come to a call in the early season, but revealed its position with a few meager bugles.



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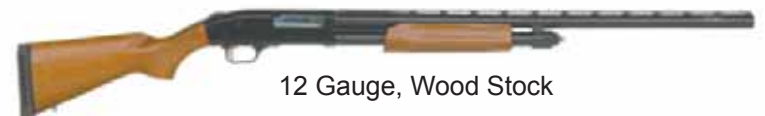
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Pre-Rut Deer Hunting Success

By Marty Prokop,
www.FreeDeerHuntingTips.com

Deer hunting during the rut and being in the right place at the right time can have you shooting the monster buck of your dreams. But, which rut should you hunt?

You might be thinking, "Wait a minute Marty Prokop, have you fallen off your rocker? There is only one rut."

Actually there are three very distinct parts to the deer rut: Pre-Rut, Main Rut and Post-Rut. Knowing and understanding each could help you bag the buck of a lifetime...

What is the Pre Rut? Pre-Rut is triggered by mature does, those that are at least 4-1/2 years old, going into a very short estrus cycle. This cycle lasts only 24 to 36 hours.

In the northern areas of the USA, Pre-Rut usually begins in early October.

Up until this short estrus cycle, bucks are still wandering around in their small bachelor groups.

As soon as the smell of an estrus doe hits the air, the bucks react by making scrapes and rubs. During this 24 to 36 hour period, deer hunters who are in the woods may notice vast numbers of fresh scrapes and rubs almost appearing overnight.

Noticing these new scrapes and increased deer activity as part of the pre-rut phase, could increase your odds of tagging a big buck.

Being in the Right Place at the Right Time Remember, Pre-Rut only last a few days, so timing is everything. Here are some options for connecting with a big buck during Pre-Rut.

Set up your deer hunting tree stand overlooking one of the new scrapes. Make sure you are downwind of the scrape. Then you simply wait him out. Eventually he will come to check his scrape.

Another way to attract the dominant buck and lure him to you is by making a mock scrape. A mock scrape should be about two feet in diameter, with a licking branch approximately three feet above the ground. Mock scrapes are made by removing leaves, grasses and debris off the ground's surface and exposing fresh earth. This can be done with a stick or garden rake. Once fresh earth is exposed, pour a good amount of Dominant Buck Urine and Doe in Heat (doe in estrus) urine onto the scrape. Saturate two scent wicks, one with dominant buck urine and the other with doe in heat deer scent, and hang them on the licking branch above the scrape.

Place your deer stand downwind of the mock scrape and wait for the big buck to come in.

During the short Pre-Rut, testosterone levels of buck deer begin to increase and very few bucks have the chance to breed the few doe deer that go into estrus. Many bucks become frustrated. This frustration is how Mother Nature alerts and prepares the rest of the bucks for the upcoming Main Rut...

Good Luck and Great Hunting!



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National Survey: Public Approval of Hunting at 18-Year High

Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation

A recent nationwide survey indicates 79 percent of Americans approve of hunting, marking a five percent increase from 2011 and the highest level since 1995. "Hunting is a way of life for many of us. Most Americans recognize and agree with that," said David Allen, RMEF president and CEO.

"Hunting is conservation! It has a tremendous positive impact on wildlife and wildlife habitat."

The survey also found that more than half of Americans (52 percent) strongly approve of hunting (79 percent strongly or moderately approve) while 12 percent disapprove (strongly or moderately) of hunting. Another 9 percent gave a neutral answer.

The increase in acceptance may be linked to results from a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service report (2011 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting and Wildlife-Associated Recreation, <http://www.census.gov/prod/2012pubs/fhw11-nat.pdf>) that shows hunting participation increased by 9 percent since 2006 while shooting participation increased 18 percent since 2009. Other Responsive Management studies on public opinion on hunting show the strongest correlation with the approval of hunting is knowing a hunter.

"Hunting has a tremendous and measurable link to conservation. Hunters deserve to be proud of their contributions to wildlife, habitat and resource management," added Allen.

Hunting directly accounts for more than a million jobs in the US and creates an overall economy of \$67 billion per year.

Hunters provide the vast majority of funding that allows state wildlife agencies to successfully manage our wildlife resources through license sales and excise taxes on hunting equipment.

Conducted in February 2013, the Responsive Management survey randomly surveyed 1,306 Americans 18 years of age and older. ✦



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How To Hunt Elk

By Colorado Parks and Wildlife

If weather is warm, elk stay spread out over vast areas at high elevations at and above timberline. In those conditions hunters need to work extra hard. When snow falls, elk will usually start to move, bunch up, and look for food sources at lower elevations or on slopes where vegetation is exposed. However, the snow fall must be significant; usually more than a foot of snow must be on the ground to get elk moving.

Hunters must get off their ATVs and hunt slowly and quietly far from any road. Elk are very smart, move quickly at any hint of danger and hide in rugged terrain. Compounding the challenge for hunters is the fact that elk typically gather in groups of 10 or more. If one is spooked they all move and they can run easily for a mile or more.

Elk are most active during the night and are likely to be grazing in transition areas--meadows next to heavy timber, where different types of vegetation meet and just above or below ridgelines. Hunters should watch these areas at first light and at dusk.

During the day, hunters need to move into the dark timber--cool north-facing slopes--and not be hesitant to hunt in difficult areas. Hunters should move as quietly as possible for short distances and then scan the woods for 10 minutes or more before moving again. Even in dense forest it's a good idea to use binoculars so you can discern subtle movement or unusual colors in the trees.

If you find the areas where animals graze at night it's likely that you'll find them in adjacent areas during the day.

When hunting in areas with roads, move far above or far below the roads to find elk. In areas where two roads are in close proximity, locate the most difficult terrain in between.

Line up your shot carefully because elk are difficult to knock down. The

best shots are delivered in the critical area of the lungs and heart just behind and below the front quarters. Never try for a head shot, as this can result in only wounding the animal.

To learn more about hunting elk, check out "Elk Hunting University" on the Colorado Parks and Wildlife web site: <http://wildlife.state.co.us/Hunting/ElkHuntingUniversity/>. This program gives extensive information regarding all phases of elk hunting.



Photo David Hannigan



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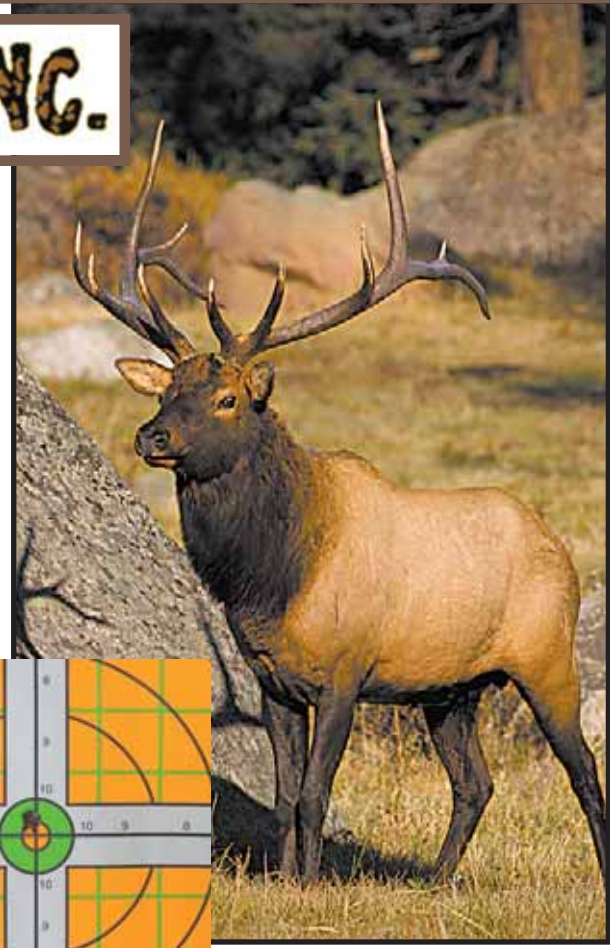
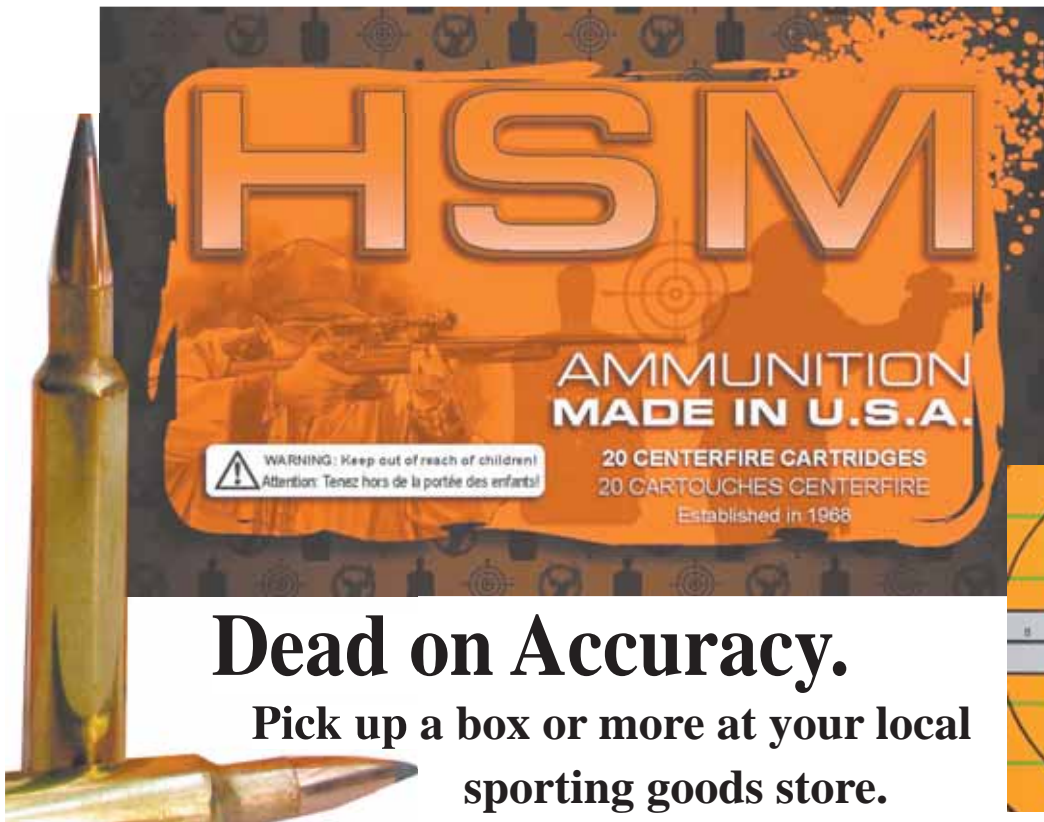
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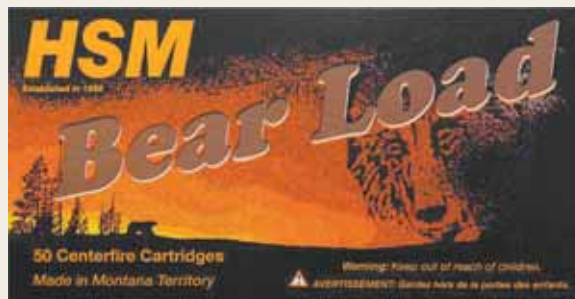
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Good Night Summer Fishing ~

By Babe Winkelman

As the days get shorter and temperatures lower, it means two things: the end of summer fishing and the beginning of hunting season. Even though it might not be winter yet, it isn't too early to at least plan for how to wind down on fishing. That means getting your gear ready for its long winter nap. Every single thing needs to be considered, from big-ticket items like boats and engines to rods, reels and tackle. Let's start with the little things you might not think about and move our way up the ladder...

TACKLE I remember once before I knew better, I got lazy at the end of the season and didn't take much care in winterizing my gear. My stuff had gotten pretty wet in a rain-soaked boat during a late fall walleye trip, and water had permeated some of my plastic jig boxes. Not much water. But enough. The next spring, a bunch of my jigs had grown enough rust to compromise their strength. When I lost a big walleye that next year due to a broken hook, I vowed to never let that happen again. Learn the lesson from me and when you put your tackle away for the winter, bring all your boxes indoors where it's warm and dry. Leave the lids open for a day or so, even if you don't think there's water in there. Then put a rust inhibitor product into each box. It can save you a lot of headaches and money.

Do the same with your boxes containing non-metal tackle like plastic worms and jig bodies to prevent mold and mildew from forming inside. Set aside a bit of time for your year-end tackle management and get everything sorted just right...

RODS It's a good idea to hose off all your rods before putting them away for winter, particularly if they've seen any saltwater use. Scrub the cork handles and the guides. Store them indoors, horizontally, and it will help keep them straight and action-packed.

REELS The first thing to do with your reels at the end of the season is to strip the line off them...Put a piece of tape somewhere on each reel and with a marker to indicate the line that came off that reel, so you replace it with the same thing the following year. For 8-pound mono I use 8M; for 12-pound fluorocarbon I write 12F. You get the idea. It's also critical to clean and lube your reels before putting them away, and I feel better storing them indoors with my rods where conditions are more stable.

ENGINES AND ELECTRONICS Winterizing your outboard is absolutely critical at the end of the year. Different brands call for different procedures, and often require authorized service to protect warranties. I'm very fond of my Evinrude E-TEC when it comes to winterizing. No need to bring it to the shop. I can do it myself in a matter of minutes with no tools and a simple process...Check your manufacturer's winterizing requirements before you do any service work. And don't forget to put the recommended amount of Sta-Bil into your fuel tank to keep it stable during the winter months.

Store all your electronics and marine batteries indoors through the winter, and hit the batteries with a trickle charge once in a while to keep them powered up. If they're the type of batteries that require water, make sure your levels are filled...

Taking care when preparing your gear for winter will help preserve your equipment and make the following season opener easier and more productive.

FISH LIKE A PRO

Quick Tips from Berkley

Catching Tail Race Trout

In-Fisherman



Tailraces below reservoirs can provide some of the best fishing for lots of big trout. Big browns migrate upstream and concentrate below dams during their annual spawning run. Big tailrace brown trout are hungry in fall and can be caught on minnowbaits, spinners, and softbaits like curlytail grubs, or by drifting smaller baits like worms, nymphs, eggs, and doughbaits in micro sizes. Focus on current edges, deep runs, and areas with refuges from flow like instream boulders and eddies that form behind instream objects. Be careful, as water conditions on reservoir tailraces can change quickly.

Feeder Creeks In Fall

In-Fisherman



Fall summons river bass to a major feast before winter sets in. Fish feel the urge to feed heavily, storing energy for the long cold period when activity is minimal. To make the most of this bite, key on ambush points in tributary creeks and backwaters, where groups of bass feed. Water levels may be low, so pitch plastic worms or tube baits into the deeper ends of fallen trees or among clumps of grass growing off the bank. Rockpiles at the mouths of creeks also are high-percentage spots.

Record Tiger Muskie Caught IF&G



Edward Kalinowski
Photo courtesy Idaho Fish and Game

...Edward Kalinowski of New Meadows has caught a record tiger muskie in Little Payette Lake. Kalinowski landed the 44.26 pound lunker on a 12-pound test line with a Neon Magic lure. The fish is 50.5 inches long with a 25-inch girth. It was caught August 6. The previous record...was caught June 16, 2001, in Hauser Lake by Douglas Butts of Eureka Mont., on a Mepps Bucktail Yellow lure.

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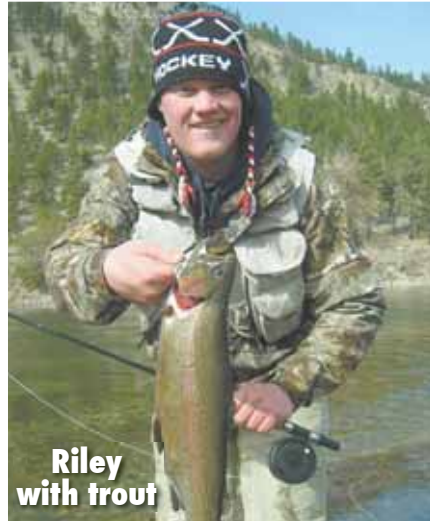
Say Hello To Success: Where to chase the Fish this Month

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While a lot of sportsman will be chasing birds and bucks this month, area anglers can expect some of the best fishing conditions of the year here in the fall. September's cool mornings bring fish out of their deep water hideouts into more shallow water slots looking to fatten up as winter slowly approaches. Late September and early October is absolutely the best time to be on the water if you love to catch big, aggressive fish. Lakes and reservoirs are great places to target now as the bass and pike stop their summer sulking, and will come to the surface to smash baits. You can also fish for browns, rainbows, big lake trout, walleye, burbot, kokanee, salmon and more. As the summer slowly turns into fall, get out and enjoy this fabulous time of the year.

HELENA RESERVOIRS

TROUT, WALLEYE
Canyon Ferry will be one of the most productive early fall destinations for eager trout and hungry walleye. Fish swimbaits and jigs on the edges of weed lines as the fish will begin to feed on minnows that have fattened up throughout the summer. A drop-off rig with a 3 to 4 inch minnow pattern can bring success. Trolling any type of flasher rig such as a Cowbell in around 20 feet of water will produce big trout. The walleye will hang in the more shallow bays. Try fishing a 1/8 or 1/16 oz. jig with a night crawler towards shore or tossing a crankbait and swimbaits for good results on walleye.
Holter Lake If you want to spend some quality time camping, it gets no better than the areas around Holter, Hauser, and Wolf Creek. Excellent campground facilities are available in all of these areas.



Fishing Holter Lake will produce big trout and walleye. Split Rock, Oxbow Bend and Cottonwood Creek are all hot spots on Holter. Hit the shaded, rock faced areas early in the morning or the late evening for hungry fish, using jigs for walleye. Trolling Wedding Rings or worm harnesses around the Split Rock area will produce fish, as will cowbells tipped with a crawler. If you need a fishing guide for any of these area waters, give Forrest, the Walleye Hunter a call at 406-459-5352.

SEELEY & SALMON LAKES

PIKE, BASS, KOKANEE
A trophy sized fish is very possible now, as the lake quiets from all of the summertime boaters. Big northerns will be lurking around and will become very combative as the fall weather sets in. Try casting Husky Jerks, spoons and spinner baits in fire tiger or silver/black color combos. These fish will key in on kokanee salmon that start to school up in preparation to spawn, so anything that mimics a 6" - 8" kokanee is a good choice.

NOXON RESERVOIR

BASS, PIKE, WALLEYE
The pike and bass will become intensely aggressive now, as the water temperatures cool. You can troll slowly along the edges of the lake, and pitch your hardware towards the shorelines to pick up fish here. The bass fishing has been very good on Noxon. Try twitching jerk baits like Rapalas in a perch pattern, or chartreuse spinner baits for both the big northerns and those feisty bass. Target big northerns along weed beds in around 8 to 10 feet of water. Hit as many small bays and inlets as possible. Late September into October is a fine time to be on Noxon.

FORT PECK LAKE

NORTHERN, LAKE TROUT, BASS
One of the most overlooked fishing destinations in the state this fall will be Fort Peck Reservoir. Mainly due to its distance from any major city and its enormous size. Known for its exceptional walleye, pike and bass fishing, late fall anglers will be targeting huge lake trout, as these fish will be preparing for their late-October and November spawn. It's one of the few times of the year you can catch a big lake trout from shore. Toss large spoons and you may land a trout in the 18 pound category, or troll Wobbling spoons or squids off flashers for good results. The eastern end of the Dam is one of the best locations to catch big trout that are holding tight to the Dam.

YELLOWSTONE RIVER

The Yellowstone River is the longest river in Montana, and is known as one of the premiere trout waters in the country. Cutthroat trout, rainbow,

brown trout, and large whitefish are in abundance in the upper half of the river. While the lower half turns primarily into a warm water fishery with walleye, catfish, sturgeon and smallmouth bass caught between Hysham and Forsyth. Smallmouth bass that go up to 4 pounds can be caught in this rocky stretch of the river, though 2 pounders are the norm. You can bounce 4-inch curly-tail grubs on jig heads along the rocky shorelines or finesse a worm among the cracks and ledges to pull these fish from the rocks. On the upper stretches it's all about the trout. Fly fishing is king here, and big trout will be active this month. This is a beautiful part of Montana, and the deeper into fall it gets, the better it gets. While you are in Yellowstone Country, you can fish the Bighorn River as well.

CLARK CANYON RESERVOIR

TROUT
Located near Dillon, MT. Take Highway 15 south from Butte to Clark Canyon Reservoir. The fishing will be tremendous here. Fish the southern part of the reservoir for 3 to 4 pound trout and larger. Fly fishing with grasshoppers, beetles, and other terrestrials, should bank some fish, or try tossing a small gold, silver and bronze Mepps for hungry trout. This time of the year, you can use almost any reflective spinner to catch the trout in Clark Canyon Reservoir.

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FLATHEAD RIVER

SMALLMOUTH BASS,
WHITEFISH

The lower Flathead, from Kerr Dam downstream to it's confluence with the Clark Fork River near Paradise has some of the best trophy smallmouth bass fishing in the state. Fish the upper section from the Dam down to the mouth of the Little Bitterroot River. The only drawback is that there are very few access points along this stretch of the river. Sloan Bridge downstream from the Dam is one of the best spots to cast from the bank. This is a good place to find big northern pike, rainbows, and a few lakera that have migrated down from the lake. You can also fish at access points at Teakettle, Sportsman's and the old steel bridge for lake superior whitefish up to 4 pounds. For these, bounce green colored jigs along the gravelly bottoms.

COEUR D'ALENE, ID

Carolina-rig the rocky points at Lake Coeur d'Alene for smallmouth. Try fishing 4 to 6 inch pumpkin or chartreuse tubes. You can fish the Twin Lakes for largemouth bass using topwater baits in watermelon or pumpkin. Pend Oreille mackinaw will take 5 inch curly-tailed grubs sweetened with perch meat or kokanee between 60 and 200 feet. Northern Pike in the Chain Lakes are taking large Colorado-blade spinnerbaits, and in Spirit Lake, largemouth are taking fire tiger crankbaits.

HENRY'S FORK, ID

When it comes to fall fishing, in the Ashton area, the action can be superb on Henry's Fork as the "hopper bite" gives way to red patterns such as Copper Johns and San Juans. The hot spot should be

the stretch from Warm River to Ashton. Browns will run as we see cooler temperatures. You can tie on an egg-sucking leach from Kit's Tackle in black and dark green patterns or try a Zonker for good action. Lure fishing tends to be good with yellow patterns or rainbow trout colors.

CLEARWATER RIVER, ID.

STEELHEAD

Every year it is different on the Clearwater River depending on water flows and the water temperature, but the good news is that you can expect exceptional fishing in the fall. The early A-run strain will be fishing well on the Grand Ronde, the Salmon and the Imnaha. The A-run are smaller steelhead mainly weighing in the 3 to 6 pound range and they have a shorter bite, mainly in the morning hours. Try drift baits, primarily roe or shrimp sprayed with a crawfish scent. Around Lewiston, Idaho fish from the Confluence up to Memorial Bridge, dragging around lighted plugs at night or running dyed shrimp under a bobber.

SNAKE RIVER, ID.

South of Lewiston, Id. the Snake River begins acting normal once again, as B-Run steelhead will overtake the 25 mile stretch of the "Upper" Snake River. There's a lot of good fishing in the upper impoundment all the way to just above the mouth of Asotin Creek on the Washington side. This is a good stretch for bobbers and baits during low flows.

B-RUN IS ON THE WAY!

You can expect the bigger B-Run steelies to start entering the system in early October, and will fish great all the way through January. Expect some of the best fishing in and around the middle of November, according to catch numbers.

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Jigs for Fall Walleyes By Bob Jensen, berkley-fishing.com

The fall season is a great time to catch lots of walleyes, and it's a great time to catch big walleyes. There are also a lot of outstanding ways to catch walleyes this time of year, but if limited to one presentation, many of the best walleye anglers in the Midwest would choose a jig. Here's how you can catch more and bigger walleyes on jigs in the next few weeks.

Be aware that autumn walleyes can be found in a variety of locations. I've caught them on deep sunken islands, shallow windblown points, and in flooded timber. **Where you're fishing for them will dictate what jig to use, and what you should tip the jig with.**

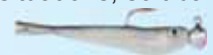
On shallow windblown points and on the deep sunken islands, a Fire-Ball jig is tough to beat. It has a short-shank, wide gap hook that really increases your odds of getting a good hookset. It's a great live bait jig. The only difference in the jig being used in the shallows versus the deeper structure is the weight of the jig. In the shallows, an eighth ounce head would be good, but a sixteenth ounce size would probably be better. In deep water, a quarter ounce jig or heavier would be best. You want to maintain good contact with the bottom.



If you're using live bait on the jig, it's really hard to beat a redbtail chub. Walleyes and smallmouth and just about everything else really like redbtails. Redtails are hardy minnows, but the livelier they are, the better they'll be. They'll keep best in an aerated container. The Frabill 1404 container is my favorite. It's quiet, but keeps the bait lively.

Minnows are a good choice for tipping jigs with, but more and more, soft bait is gaining favor. In many situations, soft bait will catch more walleyes. You can work soft bait faster, and you can catch several fish per bait.

When you find the walleyes shallow, try a three inch Berkley Power Grub, Power Minnow, or Gulp! Minnow Grub. If the fish are real aggressive, go with the four inch size: You'll catch bigger fish with bigger bait.



Power Minnow

When you switch to soft bait, you'll also want to switch jigs. Soft bait works best with a jig with a long shank. The Mimic Minnow jighead is an excellent jig for soft bait. It has a long shank with a keeper which prevents the bait from sliding down the hook, and the hook itself is large and sharp, which increases hook-ups.

As mentioned earlier, walleyes can be found in flooded timber in many areas. This is another time when soft bait excels. You're going to be ripping that jig through trees. Live bait will last about one cast, but soft bait, since it is more durable, will last much longer.

With live bait, go with six pound test Berkley Trilene Sensation line, with soft bait eight or ten pound test Sensation, or 14/6 Berkley FireLine will be just right.

Make the time to go fishing in the next few weeks, and be sure to take some jigs along. This is a great time to catch walleyes, and jigs are a great way to do so.

Growin' a Beard

Mark Reller
is owner of
Mark's Lake Maps



By Mark Reller, Montana Hunter (Season 44)

As I write it is mid August in Montana and there are early signs of change in the air. We have passed summer solstice and now the days are growing shorter by about 3 minutes per day and that rate is accelerating. I rather doubt that us humanoids really sense anymore the changes in photo-period, but I believe that elk and deer still have that capability.

Perhaps it is the cooler nights that occasionally occur that triggers their senses as well. Whatever the physical trigger mechanism is, I feel it too in my aging bones and it makes we want to start growin' my beard. There is enough grey and color variation in it now so that it makes quite good camo.

Logic tells me it is just me reading the calendar, and getting lottery-drawing hunting tags in the mail, that trips my internal switch to say it is time to hunt. Yet I resist such urban thought processes because a longing of ancient origins is truly starting to manifest within me. After 43 hunting seasons, not counting times spent with Grandpa and Dad before I was "of age", I can now describe what is about to happen.

Right now I am in the whiskers and gear phase. I start to look a bit ragged as now I only shave a few times a week. My mom used to call such scratchy beards "girl repellent" and likely she was right. My focus in the fall does shift from pursuit of feminine attentions, in fact with a strong 10 day shadow I know I become a bit anti-social and seek to be alone deep in the woods. On top of that I find myself sorting through gear. I find myself seeking mates to gloves, waterproofing boots, cleaning out and repairing backpacks, and inventorying assorted knives, meat saws, wet stones, and related camping paraphernalia.

In the evenings I yield to my yearning to shoot. My tuned-up bow is hitting good at out to 45, my rifle is spot on at 200, but my pistol group needs some work to assure that no grouse goes free without a fair poke. I work out a bit more and worry about having enough wood stocked up early so that wood gathering does not compete for time come fall.

But the real change will happen in another month in mid-September. The first few outings will be little more than camping trips to shake-down the gear and tune-up the body. I will hunt some sure, but my level of intent will not unfold until the second week or so. It is then that the metamorphosis to hunter will actually occur.

By late-September I will have regained my abilities. After nine months of the work-a-day life my internal music has gone off rhythm and I need to reset the tempo of life. I need to purge my brain of contract details, meeting times, plane schedules, bills and the like. I need to find that internal metronome that allows me to again be a hunter.

I know I am back in tune when I wake before dawn deep in the woods of western Montana or in the prairies to the east. I know I am in tune when all the gear I need to sustain me is in a single backpack or in a pile behind the seat of the truck. I know all is well with the world when life breaks down into three basic elements, food, shelter and pursuit. Once I have reached that state of mind, I know I am hunting.

And the dance that comes once that song starts playing in earnest sustains me in many ways. Sure the success of meat in the freezer is good, but the real sustenance of a hunting season is much more life giving. Call me strange but once I am "in the zone" and truly hunting a clarity of mind, body and soul emerges that feels more like the "real me" than ever occurs during the 9-5 work week.

Living in elk habitat becomes a pleasure. Reading that habitat and sign guides me forward. The weather is not merely a factor that tells me to bring a coat when I leave the house, but a compass that helps direct my daily flow. Food and water are no longer meal times on the clock, but urges that need satisfied. I eat when I am hungry, I drink when I am thirsty and I sleep when I am tired. My eyes focus on the world around me. I listen with an inner ear. I track wind for scent of prey and craft strategies to cover my own scent, the scent of the predator. I feel not only the brisk sting of early winter on a frosty October morning, but also the pull of an internal compass.

It is that internal hunting compass and that aggregate of sight, sound and smell that starts to control the pace and direction of my strides.

(continued on page 27)

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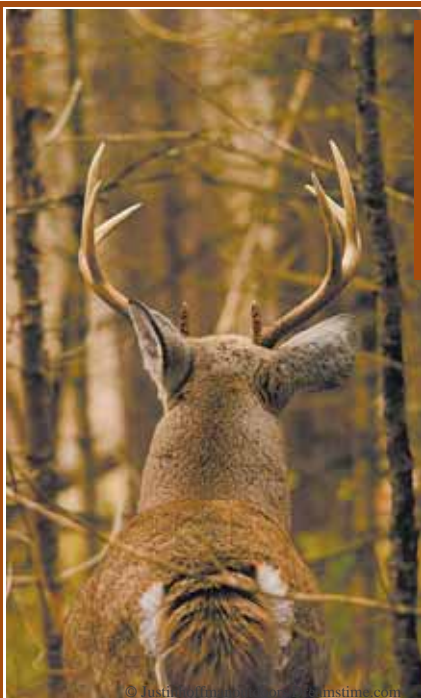
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DEER HUNTING Can Be A GAMBLE

By Bob Humphrey, Yamaha Outdoors

There is no question that pre-season scouting is one of the key elements to being a consistently successful hunter. Put your time in before the season and you can maximize your time during the season. But even the best laid plans can sometimes go astray. You may have done everything right yet your hottest stand fails to produce. How you respond can make the difference between a long and frustrating season, or a short, successful one.

KNOW WHEN TO HOLD 'EM First you need to decide if the stand really is an underachiever, or if it's just not ripe. Some stands may produce all season while others have a very narrow window of productivity.

Think about why you picked the stand in the first place. Was there a lot of sign, and if so, was it fresh? Is it a feeding area? A travel route? Travel corridors away from food may not get used a lot early in the season. But once the rut kicks in, bucks may use them at any time of day as they cruise for does.

KNOW WHEN TO FOLD 'EM On the other hand, sometimes hot stands suddenly go cold. Try to figure out why. Maybe it was a hot feeding area early, when the persimmons or the white oak acorns were falling, but the food has dried up and so have the hunting opportunities. Maybe bird season just opened and the upland gunners have moved deer out of the area. Or, maybe some other hunter who is less meticulous with his scent control moved into the area, having the same effect.

GAMBLE AND WIN

It can be a tough move to make, but boldness sometimes yields greater rewards. If you're a conscientious hunter, you've front-loaded your efforts, scouting before season so you can save valuable in-season time for hunting. But if your stand goes cold, you're wasting time. And if you stick it out on a cold stand, you're throwing good time after bad. Sometimes you've got to roll the dice and burn a hunting day with some in-season scouting.



Photo Bob Humphrey

There are some distinct advantages. Your original stand location may have been hot when you found it two weeks before the season, but things change fast. Now, the season is already open; so you can hunt fresh sign immediately. Food sources change during the season and you should change with them. Move from the persimmons to the white oaks, then later from white oaks to red oaks. Deer may be in the corn,

until it's cut. Then they'll move up on the oak ridges. They'll hit the apple trees hard when the first frosts kill and drop apples en-masse. But once that crop is gone, so are the deer.

Don't be afraid to burn a day by getting out and covering some ground. Scout new areas. Check out areas you haven't hunted in a while. Things do change from year to year, sometimes for the better. When the action slows, you have two choices. Stick it out and there's a good chance you'll end up frustrated. Or you can hop on your ATV, head for the hills and scout some new ground. You may find it well worth the risk.

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Honoring RMEF's First Life Member, Clint Mills R.I.P. RMEF



Paying Tribute to RMEF's First True Believer On March 1st, 1985, the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation was living hand-to-mouth, headquartered in a trailer in Troy, Montana, that would have made the Unabomber feel right at home. With the RMEF's first anniversary just two months away, total membership remained well south of 2,000 and the outfit was surviving on prayers and borrowed time. But on that day, a man named Clint Mills became the foundation's first life member for \$600.

"I can assure you, the odds that the Elk Foundation would live to see the end of 1985 were about the same as they are for a wobbly legged newborn elk calf," says RMEF co-founder Bob Munson. "I can't overemphasize the boost it gave us to have Clint believe in this dream of ensuring a future for wild, free-ranging elk enough to step up and make that kind of commitment."

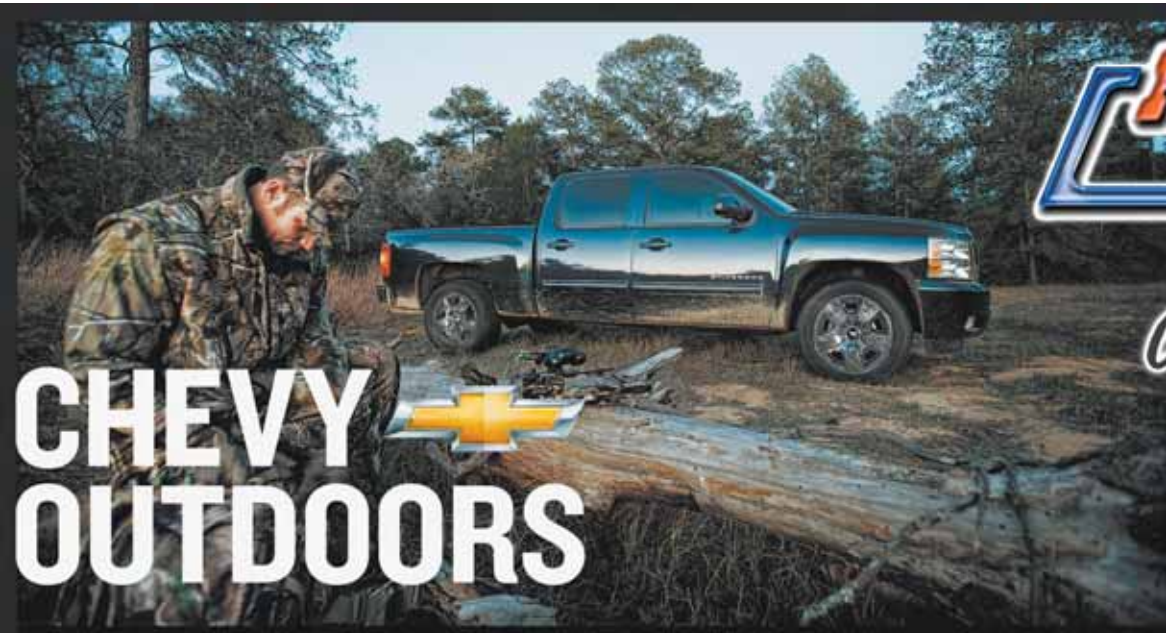
So who was this man, the RMEF's first true believer? Clint Mills grew up on a cattle ranch on Montana's Rocky Mountain Front, the beginning of a lifetime spent on the back of a horse. He went on to manage cattle ranches and dude ranches, work the oil fields, log and operate heavy equipment on dirt construction, and—his favorite—work as an outfitter and guide in the Scapegoat and Bob Marshall wildernesses.

Along the trail, though, Clint served 24 years in the Army, becoming a Green Beret (Special Forces) and doing two tours of duty in Vietnam. He left the Army as a First Sergeant with a Bronze Star and a Joint Commendation Medal from General Westmoreland himself. A master parachutist, Clint made more than 600 jumps, his worst injury a sprained ankle.

Clint's great-nephew, Brett Mills, says, "I've been around some tough men in my life, and he's one of the few I've been in awe of. He was old-school. He was a man of few words and all action. It was never about talking with him; it was always about doing."

And that's how it was with becoming Life Member #1. Since Clint Mills led by example 28 years ago, 20,962 others have been inspired to join him as life members of the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation. That means more than one out of every 10 RMEF members are now life members. The price of membership has since increased twice to keep up with inflation (to \$1,000 in 1990 and \$1,500 in 2006), but our members have remained more than willing to follow Clint's lead. They hail from all 50 states and 16 countries, ranging from Australia to Switzerland. Newborn babies have been signed up in their first hour on Earth. Octogenarians with way more of the trail behind them than ahead have still gotten in for life. And even though they've already made a significant, lasting commitment, life members are consistently among the Elk Foundation's best donors, showing their passion by making additional ongoing contributions to the future of elk country.

"Clint was always proud to have been the RMEF's first life member," says Charlie Decker, co-founder of the Elk Foundation. "That sure goes both ways. We've always been proud to have him as the first."

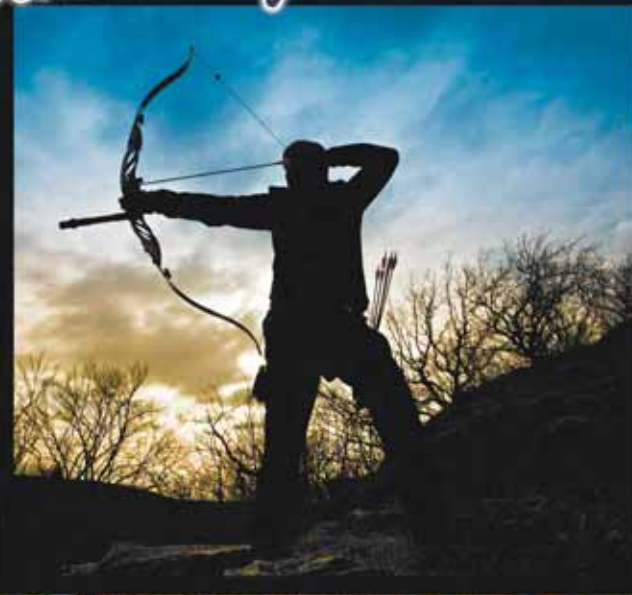


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HUNTING & CONSERVATION NEWS

Duck Populations Are Still Strong, And Pond Numbers Are Up USFWS

Duck populations are strong, according to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service 2013 Report on Trends in Duck Breeding Populations. The preliminary estimate of total duck populations from the traditional survey area (north-central United States, south-central and northern Canada, and Alaska) is 45.6 million birds. This estimate represents a 6 percent decrease from last year's estimate of 48.6 million birds but is still 33 percent above the long-term average. The total duck estimate excludes scoters, eiders, long-tailed ducks, mergansers and wood ducks.

The report also notes: Estimated mallard abundance is 10.4 million birds, similar to the 2012 estimate of 10.6 million birds and 36 percent above the long-term average.

Blue-winged teal estimated abundance is 7.7 million. Although this is 16 percent below the 2012 estimate of 9.2 million, the blue-wing population is 60 percent above the long-term average. Similarly, the green-winged teal estimate of 3.1 million is 12 percent below last year but still 51 percent above their long-term average.

The northern pintail estimate of 3.3 million is similar to the 2012 estimate of 3.5 million and 17 percent below the long-term average...

The combined lesser and greater scaup estimate of 4.2 million decreased 20 percent from last year and is 17 percent below the long-term average of 5 million. The canvasback estimate of 787,000 is similar to the 2012 estimate and 37 percent above the long-term average...

Although the U.S. prairies received record snowfall in April, habitat conditions were still rated only fair to poor, similar to last year. The total pond estimate (prairie Canada and the north-central United States combined) is 6.9 million, 24 percent higher than the 2012 estimate of 5.5 million ponds and 35 percent above the long-term average.

Special Access Agreements Help Bighorn Sheep Hunters in the Missouri River Breaks MFWP

Two special access agreements reached between private landowners and the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks will improve opportunities this fall for bighorn sheep hunters in the Missouri River Breaks south of Havre.

The access agreements allow private lands within the Sanford and Brewer ranches to be legally accessed for free by sheep hunters who have drawn licenses in Hunting District 680.

Access to these private lands in turn connects to thousands of acres of public lands that would otherwise be difficult to get to. Except for coyotes on the Sanford Ranch, other types of hunting are not covered by the agreements. The Sanford Ranch land is located along the Ragland Bench south of the Cow Island Trail off Lloyd Road. The agreement between the ranch owners and FWP runs from Sept. 5 to Dec. 1, 2013, and allows up to one bighorn ram party and three bighorn ewe parties to access the land per week. Other provisions include: Beginning Aug. 22 and at least a week in advance of their trip, hunters can call FWP's Havre office at 406-262-6177 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Monday through Friday to reserve their access to the Sanford Ranch property. Permission will be granted on a first-come, first-served basis.

- Access can be reserved for up to a week. If a hunt is completed earlier than planned, the Havre FWP office will need to be notified to cancel any remaining days. Other cancellations will also be handled through the Havre office.

- Hunters must receive their permission slip, vehicle tag, and map of the ranch prior to using the property...

- Hunters can receive permission to access the Brewer Ranch for up to a week-long period. If they complete their hunt earlier than planned, hunters will need to contact the landowner to cancel the remaining days. If they are unable to hunt in their designated time slot, they also must contact the landowner to cancel their reservation...

REGIONAL NEWS

RMEF Grant to Help Wolf Management in Wyoming

Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation



A \$50,000 grant from the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation will assist the Wyoming Game and Fish Department (WGFD) with its wolf management plan.

The funding will expand WGFD's knowledge of predator-prey interactions between wolves and elk. It will also expand the radio collar program to help managers better understand the home range, territory size, pack size and other biological traits and actions of the wolf so they can better implement management techniques.

"It is vital that state agencies have a firm grasp on predator populations in order to properly implement science-based management practices," said David Allen, RMEF president and CEO. "This grant will help WGFD gain more knowledge to better understand its wolf population so it can better implement its approved wolf management plan."

"Our partnership with the RMEF is extremely valuable to us and this grant shows how this relationship continues to develop great opportunities for conservation," said Tom Ryder, Wildlife Assistant Division Chief for WGFD. "This grant will help the Department execute its adaptive wolf management plan by helping to increase our knowledge of wolf/elk interactions, wolf home range, and pack and territory size. Each of these biological components is important for the management plan and to our shared constituents."

In keeping with the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation, RMEF supports state-regulated hunting and trapping as the preferred tools of wolf management. RMEF staunchly supports management to balance and control wolf populations.

"We maintain our longstanding commitment to and support of the goal of state management which is to sustain all wildlife species on balance with the available habitat and the local communities where so many of us live," added Allen.

RMEF also remains committed to learning more about wolves through research efforts. Since 1989, RMEF invested nearly \$664,000 in research grants to advance scientific understanding of wolves, wolf interactions with other species, and overall wolf management. The total includes \$174,079 in Wyoming-specific research projects and more than \$200,000 in science grants in just the past five years. Most of the contributions paid for independent research by leading universities, state and federal wildlife conservation agencies and tribes.

"Part of RMEF's mission is to ensure the future of elk and other wildlife," said Allen. "This grant helps managers do just that in Wyoming by helping them know how many wolves are out there, where they travel and what effect they have on elk, deer and other ungulates."

RMEF will allocate nearly \$2.9 million for elk and wildlife-related conservation projects in 27 states with wild, free-ranging elk populations in 2013. Additionally \$570,000 will also be allocated to hunting heritage programs in 49 states.

Read regional news from Colorado on hunting Colorado pronghorns, page 27

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-LASER RANGEFINDERS, THE FOURTH LEG OF HUNTING OPTICS-

By Jeff Davis, Editor, Whitetails Unlimited, www.whitetailsonlimited.com

When you think of hunting - optics, binoculars, rifle scopes and spotting scopes are the traditional tools. Laser rangefinders started out as large and expensive. That's changed. Laser rangefinders now are small, durable and while not cheap, are not terribly expensive. Knowing how far away your target really is can make you a much better shot.

TIP 1: DON'T BELIEVE YOUR EYES

A lot of guys think they can accurately tell how far away objects are. They're wrong. Don't argue, they're just wrong. Go to an open area, find objects and write down your, and your buddy's range estimates. Do at least 10 objects. Then break out a rangefinder and actually measure the distances. I guarantee you'll be surprised at how bad everyone is.

TIP 2: THE TARGET MATTERS

Any laser rangefinder can measure to the broad side of a barn, but not all can do so well on a soft, furry moving deer. The rangefinder works when the laser reflects off the target and bounces back to the unit. The side of a barn is large and flat, a perfect reflective surface. The side of a deer, or head, or rump, is not a good reflector, because it has an irregular shape and soft surface. Better rangefinders will do better on the soft targets.

TIP 3: DO A REAL-WORLD TEST

Don't evaluate different models by going to the door of the sporting goods store and measuring distances to buildings or cars. They are perfect targets, and deer aren't. Take a couple of friends (or enemies, if friends are hard to find), drape soft blankets (or a fur coat) over them and have them walk at different ranges. See if different models are better at ranging soft, moving objects. Yes, they will look stupid, but you're the one spending the money, and you know they will want to play with it.

TIP 4: HOW FAR IS FAR ENOUGH

Rangefinders will be accurate within a certain range, 400 yards, or 800 yards, for example, and this will be stated clearly on the box or in the manual. Which one is better for you? It all depends on what you need. If the rangefinder is good to 1,200 yards it will likely be more expensive, but how often do you take that 1,130 yard shot? Just like eyeball ranging, a lot of guys think they are a dead shot at 400 yards, but not many really are. I wouldn't hesitate to go a little longer (you may go varmint hunting), but don't overbuy. If you use a bow, muzzleloader, shotgun or pistol, (and most rifle hunters) a 400-yard rangefinder will be more than enough.

TIP 5: USE THE ALTERNATE TARGET

If you are in the field and have that trophy right where you want it, but your rangefinder just can't get a good reflection, there's an easy solution. Find a hard, flat and/or stationary object near your target and measure that distance. If your alternate target is a rock 10 feet in front of or behind the buck, there will be little difference in your aiming point.

TIP 6: ACCURATE RANGE IS ONLY HALF OF THE SOLUTION

Knowing that your target is 217 yards away will do you no good if you don't know where to aim to nail a target at 217 yards. Get to the range well in advance of the season, measure distances and find your aim point at a variety of possible distances. And very importantly, use the ammunition that you will use for hunting. Different brands of ammo or different bullets will have a different drop over distance. A rangefinder will only help you if you know how your bullet travels on the way to the target.

REGIONAL NEWS



PRONGHORN PROVIDE UNIQUE HUNTING CHALLENGE

Serious pronghorn hunters are willing to wait years for the opportunity to hunt trophy bucks in the best pronghorn units in Colorado. All Colorado pronghorn hunting tags are issued by draw.

The average buck tag requires two to three preference points, but tags for premium units can require five or more points. Doe tags are easier to draw, but most hunters still need at least one point.

The majority of pronghorns are in northwest Colorado and on the eastern plains. Small populations of Pronghorn also are found in North Park, Middle Park, South Park and the San Luis Valley.

Demand for tags in the northwest region is usually highest, so more points are required. There are two reasons more hunters apply in the northwest: there are big herds with big bucks; hunters have the opportunity to hunt on both public and private land.

In eastern Colorado there are also large herds and trophy bucks. Most of the land, however, is private with the exception of some isolated pockets of public land including the Pawnee National Grasslands in the northeast and the Comanche National Grasslands in the southeast. The good news is that many ranchers and farmers in eastern Colorado are willing to grant permission to those who want to hunt pronghorn.

The best advice for a hunter to gain access to private land is to ask permission well in advance of the season. Never wait until opening day. If properly asked in advance, many landowners are willing to allow pronghorn hunting. Some will even offer directions to the best pronghorn locations, and information about watering holes and road access.

In 2011 for all manners of take, just more than 20,000 pronghorn licenses were issued, 9,883 animals were harvested for a 48 percent hunter success rate. About 80,000 pronghorns exist in the state.

Stalking pronghorns Hunters lucky enough to draw a pronghorn tag in Colorado face a unique adventure that requires a different set of strategies than those used for hunting deer or elk.

Compared to deer or elk, pronghorn are easier to locate. They roam wide-open rangeland rather than woodlands or steep mountains, they travel in large visible herds, and they do not hide in thick vegetation.

But that doesn't mean they're easy to hunt.

Pronghorn evolved with keen eyesight and the ability to outrun predators. **The vision of a pronghorn compares to a human looking through 8X binoculars. Pronghorns' ability to quickly burst into a sprint of over 60 miles per hour helps them to stay out of range of even expert marksmen.**

So what can a hunter do to increase the odds of bagging one of these magnificent unique game animals? The three major strategies are stalking, ambush and flagging.

Stalking an animal with the vision of a pronghorn on the open range can be an exercise in frustration.

If it is said that deer and elk hunters must be patient, pronghorn hunters must learn to be REALLY patient. A stalk may include crawling on your belly for an hour only to have the animals spook and quickly move a half-mile away. Experts estimate that only one out of five stalks gets the hunter close enough for a shot.

A hunter who sees the animals before being seen gains a huge advantage. That means avoiding ridge tops and hills. Pronghorn can spot objects on a ridgeline at great distances.

It is also important to consider wind direction to avoid sending a foreign odor in the direction of a pronghorn. Winds tend to change direction less frequently on the wide-open prairie.

But for hunters, avoiding being seen by a pronghorn is most important. Sometimes it takes hours of hard work to get within range. The initial part of a stalk requires a hunter to move through draws and along the back sides of ridges to avoid detection. Then you should be ready to crawl the final few hundred yards to get close enough for a shot.

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Growin' a Beard

(continued from page 19)

Once that focus is found all other distractions must be purged from the mind to hold that focus. It is then, and only then that I am truly hunting. Once that focus is achieved amazing things seem to happen. All the sensory inputs get fed through the "hunting filter" and that output can only be understood by another hunter.

Something deep inside processes all the information at hand and says, "stop here and listen again, there is more to learn". It says, "nap here in the sun, you need to be in this spot in one hour." It says, "slow down and peer over this particular spot on the ridge as quiet as you can, because your prey awaits you." It says, "wait and walk with the next gust of wind, stop when the wind stops and listen hard." When you are aware of the sound of your own footsteps and the sound of your own breathing, you know you are close to being a hunter.

The naysayer will attribute the choosing to pass on one side of the tree and not having the shot, verses the choice to step on the other side of that tree and seeing game, as merely a matter of luck or chance. But as a hunter who has been in that zone, who has purged his mind of urban life and who chooses to seek the calling of that inner compass, I say different. Too many times that still, small voice has said pause here, take one step to the side and squat and look hard. When that happens and an ear flicker and the glint from an antler tine catches your eye, it is hard to say it is just blind luck.

Perhaps in this modern world there are no longer selective pressures to favor the man who finds these skills. It likely does not favor the finding (or keeping) of a mate. There are certainly more efficient ways to put protein on the table. Ironically this modern world is more and more actually frowning on such behavior. So perhaps some question the phenomenon of pursuit. I do not. I think I am done shaving for the year.

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Hunting Sheds And FINDING A MT. LION

By Jennifer Bickel



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It had been a few months since my hunting season had ended and I was going stir crazy sitting in my house watching the snow fall all winter. I decided it was time to get in shape for the upcoming elk season and the best way to do that was shed hunting. There are a lot of people that think shed hunting is about going to a hay field and walking around looking for sheds. That's definitely not how it is when you go for elk sheds around here. Some of the places I go are the same areas that people elk hunt. It's definitely a good work out to get yourself ready for elk hunting!

I had not gone elk hunting solo yet and now that I had killed my first deer solo hunting, I figured it was time to push outside of my comfort levels again and try elk hunting alone. What better way to prepare for that than to shed hunt solo? Just the thought made me a little uneasy as there was so much that could go wrong and I have never seen another person while I was out shed hunting before so I probably wouldn't see one now. I kept thinking about all the what ifs like what if I fell and got hurt? Which really isn't out of the ordinary for me, I am probably one of the clumsiest people in the world and am constantly getting hurt. What if I come across a mountain lion, bear or wolf? For some reason I have always had this irrational fear that I was going to get attacked by one of those animals. That's one of the main reasons I had never done a whole lot by myself in the Mountains. I always took comfort in knowing that if I was with someone they could hopefully defend us against any animal we may come across.

This is elk country
and shed country.
You just have to
get out there to
find them.



Now that I was alone, that comfort was gone. Since I had started doing solo stuff, I had decided one thing I did need to have was some sort of protection other than just bear spray. (Funny side note: When I was a kid, I accidentally sprayed bear spray in the downstairs of our house thinking it was air freshener.

Sorry Mom!) I decided to get myself a .41 mag. It was big enough to stop any mountain lion or black bear that may come my way, yet not so big that I would end up having it kick back in my face.

After going out a few times I finally started to feel like I wasn't quite so nervous. But I still had an uneasy feeling at times when I would get deep into a canyon. There's something so tranquil about being deep in the wilderness by yourself, but the quiet can also be almost deafening.

One thing I learned about elk shed hunting is the elk like to get themselves deep into canyons. My normal rule of thumb, is to not look for sheds in places you don't want to walk. It never fails for me, I will get to the top of a canyon that looks like it goes all the way down to the center of the Earth and just happen to glass down there and there one will be. It doesn't matter if a horn is white or brown, for some reason it gets my adrenaline going and the spoiled little girl comes out in me and I want it.



I start out at the top of the canyon thinking, what kind of stupid animal would want to go all the way down there anyway? Then once I get down there and get the shed strapped to my pack, I look back up at the top and think, what kind of stupid person would walk all the way down here for a shed?

Oh yeah, that's me. I'm still wondering if it's stupidity or just obsession. I like to say obsession because it makes me sound a little less crazy, but sometimes I still wonder.

So far, the shed season had gone off without incident. I felt great, I was getting into shape, my shed pile was starting to really grow and I was dang proud of myself. Then came the day that I will never forget. I was just coming up out of a draw, it was starting to get dark which is much later than I usually like to be walking back to my vehicle. It was the end of spring with crystal clear dark blue skies and the smell of fresh wild flowers. There wasn't much snow left on the ground and the mule deer and elk had all shed their horns. I sat down on a rock and began to glass around the hill in front of me. As I was glassing, scanning the area some movement caught my eye. I quickly brought the binoculars back to the place where I had seen the movement and what I saw instantly drained the color out of my face.

I put my binos down and found myself looking directly into the wide eyes of a mountain lion. He stared at me and I stared at him. I felt like he was staring right into my soul. I didn't know what was racing faster, my head or my heart. It was the most terrifying moment I have ever witnessed and I couldn't remember what I was supposed to do. Was I not supposed to look into his eyes? Was I supposed to walk slowly away? Stay still? I tried to not look him in the eyes but I couldn't help it. I felt like a statue and was absolutely frozen. It was almost like I was looking at the big cat for some sort of answer. Finally, after what seemed like an hour long stare down, my heart came out of my throat, I took a breath of air and my instincts started to take over. I slowly reached around and got my pistol off of my hip and I started slowly backing away from him. We were still locked on each others eyes and I don't remember either of us blinking.

It was only by the grace of God that I made it up that hill walking backwards, without tripping. I finally got to the top and knew that my vehicle was only a couple hundred yards away. I could no longer see the lion and didn't know what he was doing or where he was but I continued taking slow, deliberate steps backwards keeping my eyes locked on where I had last seen him. At least when I could see him I knew what he was doing, now, not being able to see him I had no idea where he was and realized he could be anywhere. This was almost a worse feeling than staring him down.

I continued backing slowly until I reached my vehicle. I jumped in with my pack and everything still on. I exhaled and felt like I had been holding my breath the whole time. One of my worst fears had just happened and even though I wasn't attacked, it really shook me up. I wasn't sure if I was really cut out for all of this, maybe I had pushed myself too far.

That was the last time I shed hunted alone that year. Now I was sitting with my elk tag in my hand and had a decision to make. Do I let my fear hold me back and waste the tag or suck it up and go for it? After weighing everything out, I realized there was no way I could miss out on elk hunting in the limited draw area I had drawn. I decided to go for it. Little did I know I would have to draw my gun again, on something much bigger than a mountain lion and I would actually have to shoot.

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Ted Nugent Joins Mathews Family

To millions of music lovers, Ted Nugent has carved a permanent place in rock & roll history as the guitar-shredding showman, selling more than 40 million albums, performing more than 6,400 high-octane concerts, and continuing to set attendance records at venues around the globe.

To further millions, Nugent is the nation's most outspoken proponent of our 1st and 2nd Amendment rights, conducting thousands of pro-gun, pro-freedom, pro-America interviews in major media worldwide. He has served continuously on the Board of Directors of the NRA since his initial election in 1995, where he consistently sets records for amassing the highest number of votes received by an individual board member.

"We are a proud supporter of our Second Amendment rights—rights that protect all other freedoms. We stand firmly with Ted Nugent and the Americans that continue to make their voices heard and who choose freedom, stated Mathews Inc. President Stephen McPherson. Nugent is dedicated to preserving our great outdoor heritage for future generations and we are proud to welcome him and wife Shemane, to Team Mathews!"

When asked about the new partnership Nugent said, "The mystical flight of the arrow has always been a guiding force for my quality of life and now Mathews has truly supercharged the hunt! I'm proud to be a part of a company who stands up for our God-given rights and makes equipment second to none. I just love my new Creed and don't think I've ever shot this accurate in my entire bowhunting life!"

Also joining the Mathews family is Ted's wife, Shemane. "I've been shooting bows for twenty-four years but never had one that felt so good from the first moment I shot it. My Mathews Jewel is lightweight, yet powerful and accurate. Every woman needs a Jewel!" Shemane stated.

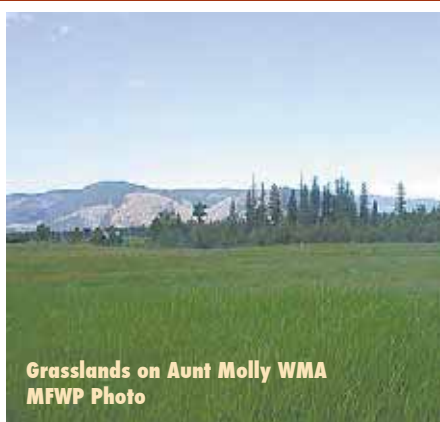
Catch the award-winning Ted Nugent Spirit of the Wild television show—seen exclusively on Outdoor Channel—where he proudly serves as ambassador for bowhunting and now, the largest bow manufacturer in the world—Mathews Inc!

HUNTING OPPORTUNITIES

Aunt Molly WMA

on the Blackfoot River

MFWP



Grasslands on Aunt Molly WMA
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Sagebrush habitat on Aunt Molly WMA
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Wolf Trapping Certification Classes Set for Missoula, Anaconda MFWP

Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks will offer three wolf trapping certification classes in Missoula and one in Anaconda this fall.

Certification is mandatory for anyone planning to trap wolves in Montana, and students who attended a wolf trapping education class last year and received a certificate, do not need to retake one this year.

In Missoula, students can elect to take a class on...Saturday, Sept. 14 or Sunday, Oct. 6. Classes run from 9am-4pm and will be held at the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation (5705 Grant Creek Road).

A class is set for Anaconda on Saturday, Sept. 28 from 9am-4pm at the Lee Metcalf Center (115 E Pennsylvania).

Classes are free of charge, and interested students may register online at fwp.mt.gov and follow the links to "wolf trapping certification."

In addition to specifics on equipment and techniques, participants will learn about the history, ethics, management, regulations related to wolves and wolf trapping.

Wolf trappers must hold a Montana trapping license and complete the class before heading to the field. **Montana's wolf trapping season runs from Dec. 15 to Feb. 28, 2014.**



Christian Schmalhofer | Dreamstime.com



10 Tips for Getting Permission To Hunt

By Bob Robb
Sponsored by Wildlife Research Center

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For more, please go to www.bowhunting.net



A successful hunting trip begins with access to prime hunting land. It's that simple.

While our nation still holds vast tracts of public land open to all of us, the truth is unless you can draw a tag for a limited-entry hunt, the odds are your chances are pretty mediocre when it comes to finding top-end critters. That means you need access to private ground, something that is harder and harder for "Joe Lunchbucket" to come by.

However, such access can still be had. Now — not days before the season opens — is the time to begin searching out permission to hunt.

HERE ARE 10 TIPS THAT HAVE PROVEN SUCCESSFUL FOR ME, AND MANY OTHERS, IN UNLOCKING THE KEY TO THE GATE.

1) Get Going NOW!: The early bird gets the worm — and, often, is the one who gains permission to hunt a new piece of ground. If you wait until right before the season opens or, even worse, during the season, the odds of getting a "Yes" drop dramatically.

2) Research: If you can call or visit somebody for the first time and call them by name, you will be ahead of the game. Learn as much as you can about the landowner. How long have they been there? Have they ever allowed hunting? What business are they in? Do they have family members that are serious hunters? Like a good lawyer, it's always best to never ask a question you do not know the answer to beforehand.

3) No Shame in Sucking Up: Is the landowner a woman? When you come calling act like it is your first date. Bring flowers and some other small gift. A man? If you can find out his favor brand of drink, bring a bottle. Something is better than nothing, within reason. Also, never show up unannounced. Try this. Send a letter with your request, and include a self-addressed stamped envelope and small note card for a reply. Make it easy for them to respond to you. Then, when you call ahead to schedule a face-to-face meeting, nobody is surprised.

4) References Will Be Checked: Think of your meeting as a job interview. Dress in clean clothes — not grubby hunting duds — and present yourself professionally. Show up in a vehicle that has been recently washed. I always bring along a small resume that includes my place of employment, personal interests, charities with which I am active, and most important of all, references from other landowners that have granted me hunting permission in the past. I encourage the new landowner to contact these references and check me out.

5) Up Close & Personal: First impressions mean everything. When the door is opened, introduce yourself and try and find something you have in common. Sports, hunting, church, community involvement, whatever the case may be this will help break the ice and make them more comfortable with you.

Tell the landowner you would welcome a tour of the property so he can show you exactly where you can drive, walk, and hunt — and where you cannot.

6) Be Flexible: It is possible somebody else hunts the land, so be prepared to be flexible. Offer to only hunt when they are not there, or only hunt a portion of the land, not all of it. If they only want you to hunt during the week and not weekends, cool. If you are a bowhunter, offer to only hunt archery season and not during the more popular gun season. Let them know you will respect any and all rules they may lay down — no hunting near livestock, close all gates, pick up garbage, etc. You are trying to get a foot in the door now, with the hopes of expanding your privileges later.

7) Sweat Equity: Perhaps the biggest carrot you can offer a landowner is your willingness to help them with some work. Volunteer to help during harvest time, or in summer to do some repair work to fences, etc. One friend of mine noticed that the landowner's yard was something of a mess. When the conversation touched on that and the owner said he just didn't have time to keep things up the way he'd like, she volunteered to cut the man's lawn every weekend during spring and summer in exchange for hunting privileges. Worked like a charm.

8) A Taste of Honey: You should always offer to share any and all game taken on the landowner's property with them. If they say yes, when you kill a deer do not just leave a quarter hanging — get it processed and bring back cut & wrapped meat ready for the freezer.

9) Predator Control: Few landowners like coyotes, and few things are more fun than shooting them. Volunteer to spend some time calling predators and helping thin their numbers. The same may be true for pesky ground squirrels. How can you lose on that deal?

10) The Papers, Please: Without question, you need to offer to sign a document that states unequivocally that you will not sue or in any way hold the landowner liable for anything that happens to you while hunting their property. I always bring such a document with me.

I want the landowner to be comfortable with me on their property and know that not only will I never hold them responsible for anything I do, that I will also leave his or her land in better condition than when I found it. I also want them to know I will never bring anyone else with me without their express permission, will only park my vehicles where they ask me to, never drive on wet fields or over young crops, harass their livestock, or in any way disrespect them or their property.

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UPLAND BIRD FORECAST MFWP



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2013 should still shape up to be near to just below average in Montana for upland game bird hunters.

All things considered—from last summer's drought to this spring's floods—2013 should still shape up to be near to just below average in Montana for upland game bird hunters.

Here's the run down on the status of Montana's top upland game birds.

Gray (Hungarian) Partridge-

While no formal surveys are conducted for huns in Montana, various observations along with weather and habitat conditions suggest huns will be average to below average this season. Observations in Regions 3 and 6 suggest average numbers. Observations from Region 5 suggest numbers will be below average and lower than last year.

Mountain Grouse-

Observations in western Montana suggest average to somewhat below average numbers of all species.

Pheasants-

The real bright spot is in northeastern Montana's Region 6, where pheasant numbers continue to improve and are well above long term averages. In this area, spring "crow counts"—where wildlife biologists travel specific routes to count and record the "crows" of cock pheasants to determine the size of the population—were 15 percent above the long term average. Also, consider southeastern Montana where spring crow counts in Region 7, were 40 percent below the all time high counts last year, but still 5 to 25 percent above the long term average. In northwestern Montana, favorable weather in Region 1 resulted in above average counts on the Ninepipe Wildlife Management Area. Region 3 reported average counts for southwestern Montana. In Region 5, in the Billings area, pheasant crow counts varied and were near average to well below long-term averages. Overall, Region 5 expects a slight improvement in pheasant numbers over last year.

Sage Grouse-

Statewide, male attendance at leks averaged 14.9 males per lek which is 48 percent below long-term averages, and down from 19.2 males per lek last year. The drop is likely a function of extreme drought conditions during 2012 which led to low brood survival. The drop in abundance was somewhat uniformly distributed across sage grouse range in Montana. Consequently, hunters can expect numbers to be near average to well below average in all regions. Excellent brood rearing conditions may mitigate the declines to some extent.

Sharp-tailed grouse-

Region 3 reported average to below average numbers. Lek surveys and other observations in Region 6 indicate sharptail numbers will be average to slightly below average across the region. General observations from Region 5 similarly suggest below average numbers. ❖

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Location, Decoys and Calling

Photo and article by Steve Hickoff
Yamaha Outdoors

Let's call these The Big Three: location, decoys and calling. A hunting emphasis with one is likely, and all, well maybe.

LOCATION Your Yamaha ATV & Side-by-Side will help you find locations during scouting runs. This includes deer, ducks, geese and even fall turkeys. Factor in elk, antelope, moose and whatever other big-game species you favor too. Location, as they say in the real estate wars, is everything.

Okay, you've found a place the species you want to hunt tend to favor—at least in that specific time period. It'll change, often with shifting food (or water) sources. Scouting effort matters.

DECOYS Your four wheels will also



help you haul decoys to that location. With ducks and geese, moving a huge spread in and out of spots is often essential...

Decoys are never more important in waterfowl hunting. Next to location, they rule. Sure, you can kill wood ducks along a river where overhanging oaks plopp acorns onto those stream banks, and do it without decoys. That's called being where they want to be. In other locations, you may need to pull sky-bound birds down to you—even if they were moving to somewhere else.

While decoys are used in certain bowhunting circles, whitetail fakes surely aren't on everyone's radar. That's true for fall turkey hunting as well. Though decoys are trending big these days for spring gobbler hunting, in either-sex autumn bird locations, some tend to leave dekes in storage until next year.

CALLING Want to start a good camp discussion this fall? Debate how important calling is to pulling your game of choice into range... Surely you can't hunt game where you don't find it, so location rules. Consider all three as you hatch your hunt plan. And don't forget your four Yamaha wheels.----

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Michael Uses A Hoyt Spyder 30

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Hunting with Team Realtree as the host of "Realtree Road Trips" seems like the job that every outdoorsman would love to have — you'd get to hunt some of the greatest places in the world, take trophy game and live the big life as a professional hunter. After reading this up-front interview with Realtree's own Michael Waddell, you might just find that a day in the life of those hunting boots isn't as easy as he makes it look.

First off, tell readers how on earth you landed your current job with Bill Jordan's Team Realtree?

MW: Hunting has always been a big part of my life, so landing a job with Realtree was like a dream come true for me. I had won several turkey-calling competitions, and some of Realtree's pro staffers had mentioned my name to Bill Jordan. I finally met Bill at a turkey-calling contest in 1994 in Perry, Georgia. I won that contest. After we met, Bill ended up putting me on Realtree's hunting advisory staff. That spring, Realtree invited me to guide an outdoor writer's hunt. That experience went well, and I started running a camera during other Realtree hunts. For the first year and a half or two years, I worked behind the scenes. Then, because of my background with turkey-calling competitions, Bill allowed me to do a little turkey hunting and to give calling tips on the videos. As time progressed, I spent more and more time in front of the camera until I became a constant on the Monster Bucks videos. Realtree was growing a lot in its production company at the time and needed someone who could travel, run a camera and learn to edit. I fit that bill. Hunting on camera comes very natural to me because I grew up hunting and fishing. I feel like I'm no different than the guys who watch these videos.

Run us through your typical day during hunting season.

MW: While in hunt camp, I'm usually the last one to go to bed at night. I like to stay up, talk and hangout, so the other guys are usually shaking me awake the next morning. We get up 1-1/2 hours before we plan to get to the deer stand so that we have time to make plans, check the camera gear and eat breakfast. On average we spend 8 hours in the stand a day. We go out first thing in the morning and stay in the stand for several hours. Then we'll come in to eat lunch, hang stands in other locations and do some scouting. We'll then go back out until dark. If we're hunting somewhere like Canada, we'll stay in the stand from before dawn to dusk. We'll pack a lunch before we leave that morning and we'll stay out there all day long. Once we're in for the evening, we'll eat a good meal and will then just hang out with everyone in camp. If college football is on, we may watch a little bit of TV, but typically we just enjoy talking and goofing off with the other guys...

If you only could hunt one game species for the rest of your life, what would it be and why?

MW: I love the camaraderie and the strategy involved in hunting turkeys. I also enjoy learning about the language of the wild turkey. Not only does a hunter have to learn to talk turkey, but he also has to become a good hunter and woodsman in order to take these smart birds. You have to have a lot of knowledge about turkeys in order to plan a strategy for hunting them. I also enjoy taking other folks turkey hunting because turkey season occurs during a pleasant and pretty time of the year. We can have a lot of fun talking and goofing off together; then we can get serious and do what it takes to bag a nice gobbler...

Who would you say is the most interesting person you've ever hunted with?

MW: It'd no doubt be rocker and legendary hunter Ted Nugent. There's just no one else like him. His passion for hunting and the outdoors and fighting for gun rights is unrivaled. He's extremely sincere with his message, and he's down to earth but interesting. Ted is not as wild and crazy as he may come across on TV, but he is radical in the way he expresses himself. He speaks no differently than the way he plays his guitar. He's passionate about everything he says and knows how to hit just the right strings so that you really listen to him. You don't ever want to get into a debate with him because you will lose. He has an amazing memory and has so many facts stored in his head. He challenges me to be a bigger and better spokesperson for the outdoors... ♦

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NSSF® Study: First-time Gun Buyers

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A study commissioned by the National Shooting Sports Foundation® reveals that first-time gun buyers are largely active in one or more shooting activities and that women are motivated to purchase their first firearm predominately for personal defense.

NSSF is the trade association for the firearms, ammunition, hunting and shooting sports industry. The study, "NSSF Report: First-Time Gun Buyer," was done to help determine the motivations for the first firearm purchase and how these firearms are being used....

Key findings include...

-The majority of first-time buyers (60.3 percent) tend to be active, using their gun once per month or more, with one in five reporting usage of once a week or more.

-Target shooting is by far the most popular shooting activity among first-time gun owners, with 84.3 percent of respondents saying they used their firearms for this purpose, followed by hunting (37.7 percent) and plinking (27.4 percent). Practical pistol shooting (17.3 percent) and clay-target shooting (14.6 percent) were shooting sports also enjoyed by first-time buyers.

-First-time gun owners who have participated in hunting (53.2 percent), practical pistol shooting (46.3 percent), clay-target sports (44.0 percent) and gun collecting (42.4 percent) said they want to increase their participation in these activities.

-The top-ranking factors driving first-time gun purchases are home defense (87.3 percent), self-defense (76.5 percent) and the desire to share shooting activities with family and friends (73.2 percent). Women, in particular, are highly focused on personal defense and self-sufficiency.

-Older first-time buyers--the 55 to 65 age group--indicated concern that firearms may no longer be available to them was one of many reasons for their purchase.

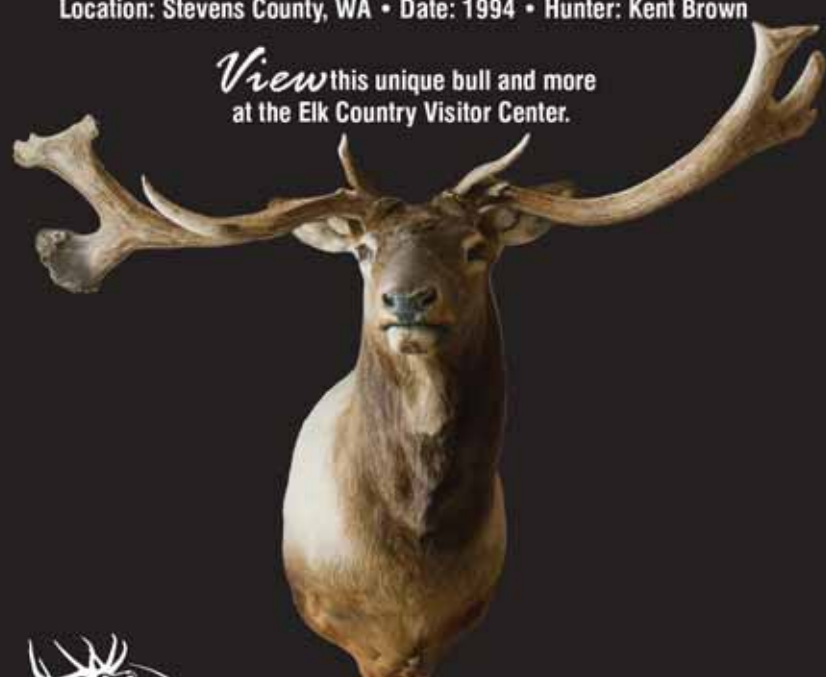

-Most first-time buyers purchased their guns through local gun shops (43.6 percent) and mass retailers...(33.6 percent).

-First-time gun buyers spent an average of \$515 for their first gun and nearly as much as for accessories (\$504). Nearly a quarter of first-time buyers bought at least one more firearm within the first year after their first purchase spending more, on average, on the later purchase...

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GET RATTLED

By Babe Winkelman

As the booming, click-clack music of clashing antlers echoed through the quiet timber, I heard the telltale sound of crunching hoofs from across a brushy draw. My pulse immediately became palpable, and I reached for my bow. Still unseen, I could hear the deer getting closer and I could only assume it was a buck. In my mind's eye, he was a B&C giant. Then I spotted movement as he snuck through a thick tangle of sumac, circling wide around my location where he'd heard my mock sparring match.

His route would take him through an opening that I had ranged earlier at 31 yards. Perfect. When he stepped into that opening, he'd be mine. He continued, as if on a string. I drew. He stepped into the opening, stopped, and stood statue-like. He couldn't have been more broadside. And his antlers couldn't have been smaller. "Button Buck" for this guy was an overstatement, and I eased down the bowstring.

Even though that animal wasn't what I was after, the entire event thrilled me in wonderful ways. There's nothing more exciting than rattling in a buck. It gets the adrenaline going, big time.

October marks the beginning of a buck's yearly cycle when he starts to really respond to rattling. He will react to the sounds of sparring as soon as the velvet sheds and bucks begin tickling antlers in late summer/early autumn. During this period, when bucks are still mingling a bit in bachelor groups, their sparring is more playful and seems to just establish an unofficial pecking order. They're not out to kill one another – YET. That will happen as the breeding season gets nearer.

As October advances, bucks get more solitary and testosterone levels steadily increase. Each day that goes by makes them more preoccupied by the upcoming rut, and boosts their thirst for aggression and dominance. Hunters should realize this and vary their rattling style to match the seasonal disposition of the area buck herd.

So during early October in the northern states, rattling should be fairly gentle and non-threatening. Tickling the antler tips with occasional heavier grinding works best during the "pecking order" phase of the pre-rut. Don't expect too many deer to come crashing in to watch the fight or get involved themselves. They're more likely to wander in with varied interest.

By mid-October, the fights you mimic with your rattling antlers can get a little more intense. Then in late-October, you can begin to emulate knock-down-drag-out battles to fire up nearby bucks and hopefully get them charging in. Think of it like the temperature of a rising fever. In early October it's 99.1 degrees. Mild. Nothing to get worked up about. By Halloween, it's a 104° fever. It's not fright-night, it's fight-night and bucks will be hungry for battle.

This is particularly true in areas where the buck-to-doe ratio is pretty even. In that scenario, there's a lot of competition for available does that are coming into estrus. If your hunting region has far more does than bucks, then bucks are less prone to spend their time fighting when there are plenty of girls to go around.

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Regardless of the October period or the bucks' general rutting mood at the time, it's important to rattle antlers in the proper way. This includes setting up with consideration for wind direction. Bucks like to get downwind of a fight and then come in following their noses. This gives them security and allows them to smell "who" is fighting. Believe me, they come to know one another by scent – the same way you can often identify friends, siblings, etc. by their unique smells. With wind direction in mind, it's a good idea to set up with shot openings flanking your downwind direction – so if bucks try and circle downwind of your location you can intercept them with a shot.

When possible with available cover and ambush opportunities, rattling is most effective when done from the ground – because very few bucks ever fight in a treetop. A dynamite technique is to hunt with a partner and position the primary shooter in a treestand while the rattler (who is also the secondary shooter) takes a position in good ground cover and does the rattling from there. The elevated hunter can get away with a lot more movement when the buck's attention is directed to a position away from the treestand location.

Begin rattling sequences softly, to avoid immediately spooking a buck that might be located nearby. Following the first short, soft sequence and a few minutes of silence, the volume and intensity of the rattling can increase. And don't forget, when bucks fight they just don't stand there bashing antlers. They're moving on their feet like a couple of cage fighters, crashing into brush and breaking branches. It's a brawl! So make it sound like one by raking brush and thumping trees. Just be careful not to get spotted making all that visual commotion.

When everything comes together just right, that buck will come marching in and give you the thrill of your life. And hopefully he'll be a giant monarch instead of my miniature button buck.

Good Hunting!

Babe Winkelman


KRIS WINKELMAN
WITH HER MONTANA MULE
DEER



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Bob Robb



Are Whitetails STRANGE or What?

By Bob Robb

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Whitetail archery season is set to open in your state soon (if it hasn't already), which made me go through some old research projects that show us some of the things that deer, and deer hunters, do that are a bit off the wall. How about this one? Dr. Kim Tolson and Benjamin Oubre at the University of Louisiana at Monroe found three deer at the Fort Polk military base with lead bullets in their stomach. Deer eating bullets? Yes, in fact one 6 1/2-year-old doe had 35 whole bullets in her stomach. The stomach of a 1 1/2-year-old buck had 15 bullets and 6 lead fragments, and a 5 1/2-year-old buck had 14 bullets. What's up with that? Could this be a new baiting technique? You know, lay some old ammo on the ground with a sign that says, "Eat lead, sucka!"

Now, since lead isn't recommended for human consumption, if deer had lead bullets in their stomach they just might have some residues in muscle. So the researchers biopsied 84 more deer and found that six had elevated levels of lead in the liver, but their muscles were fine.

You ask, why would deer eat lead bullets? The researchers believe that bullets within the military base, left there after years of military maneuvers, oxidized and this caused sodium build up on the bullets, and the sodium is probably what caused the deer to eat them. I guess we'd call them mini-bullet-salt blocks. I doubt that this is any cause for concern in the wild as spent bullets would not be found in high numbers except on a military base.

You think that's strange? The Westvaco Ecosystem Research Forest is an 8000-acre West Virginia area owned and maintained for wildlife research by Meadwestvaco Corporation. University of Georgia researchers recently concluded a study on deer movements at the forest and in the course of that study they observed some unusual behavior. They had a number of does radio collared from April to September, 2004 and noted that quite a few of those deer were leaving their home ranges for short periods of time. Deer seldom leave their home ranges, but these does were traveling two miles, then returning on the same day. Even more unusual was the fact that all of these deer were going to the same location.

This caused the researchers to check out that location and they found a gas well. Now gas wells are rather common in that region of West Virginia, but at this one they found the reason for the unusual deer movement. When you drill for gas, you often get a salty brine liquid; at this well that brine was found to have very high concentrations of sodium. That is why the deer went to this well over the many others in the area.

We know that deer go to natural salt licks, especially in May and June. Visitation to this "salt lick" was no different. The highest visitation rates were found in May, when does are near birth and bucks are starting to grow antlers.

We all are aware that one of the reasons the non-hunting public tolerates us is that hunters help control high deer numbers as part of local wildlife management.

But one Pennsylvania study gives reason for concern. This 113,048-acre research area was a 113,048-acre public forest in central Pennsylvania that is very rugged, with steep hills up to 61 degrees in slope. Paved road access was monitored, and hunters were stopped and asked to volunteer in the study. The hunters were told that they'd need to carry GPS units during the day and then stop for a post-hunt interview as they headed for home.

Over 250 hunters agreed. When they left the area, they were interviewed and asked to show researchers map locations where they walked. Hard to fib to the interviewers when you have a GPS unit that has recorded where you have been, right? The results showed that most people have no idea how far they traveled.

(continued next page)



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Are Whitetails Strange or What? (continued from page 45)
In this study hunters walked an average of 3.4 miles per day, and 87 percent hunted within 0.3 miles of a road! Remember, these guys were not road hunting, but they didn't get very far from the road when they hunted. And get this — the hunters thought they were one mile from a road.!

In fact, hunter density was predictable based on distance from roads and steepness of the habitat. For every 550 yards from a road, hunters were three times less likely to hunt. For every five degrees of slope the area was 1.5 times less likely to be hunted.



Want to find a place in that 113,000 acre public land where you wouldn't be bothered by hunters? Simply walk a little farther and find some steep ravine with thick cover and you'd probably find deer and no hunters.

There's more. Many Pennsylvania hunters have been complaining for years that recent management strategies have excessively lowered deer numbers. Complaints of not seeing enough deer, nor any deer at all, have been common. The Game Commission has taken major flack because of increased doe harvests as many hunters feel deer numbers are too low. But the Commission is concerned about forest ecology and overbrowsing, and in some areas forest habitat is in terrible shape.

Maybe deer numbers are too low in some locations — but on this research area, it appears that hunters just aren't hunting hard enough to control deer. That can be said since hunters harvested only seven percent of radio-collared adult does in the area. Because hunter success was so low and the fact that hunters just didn't get off the roads, the researchers concluded that "hunting may not be an effective tool for controlling deer on large tracts of public land in Pennsylvania with steep terrain." If you are concerned about the future of hunting and our acceptance by the non-hunting public, then this conclusion is a bit scary.

Let's end with this one. Remember when the thinking was that by putting wildlife warning reflectors mounted on posts along roads that supposedly deter deer from crossing roads by reflecting car headlights into the area along the road edge and scaring deer from crossing? Do/did they ever work?

University of Georgia researchers used infrared technology to determine exactly where deer were as researchers drove down the road beside the reflectors. This technology allowed the researchers to see exactly where deer were from the heat radiated from their bodies. They knew where the deer were before their headlights hit the wildlife-warning reflectors.

Their conclusion? Wildlife-warning reflectors do not reduce deer-vehicle collisions. Instead, it appears that the deer reflections actually increased the chances for a deer to get hit. With no reflectors the deer walking toward a road would pause to let the car pass. But with the reflectors in place, they didn't pause as often and continued to walk into the road.

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