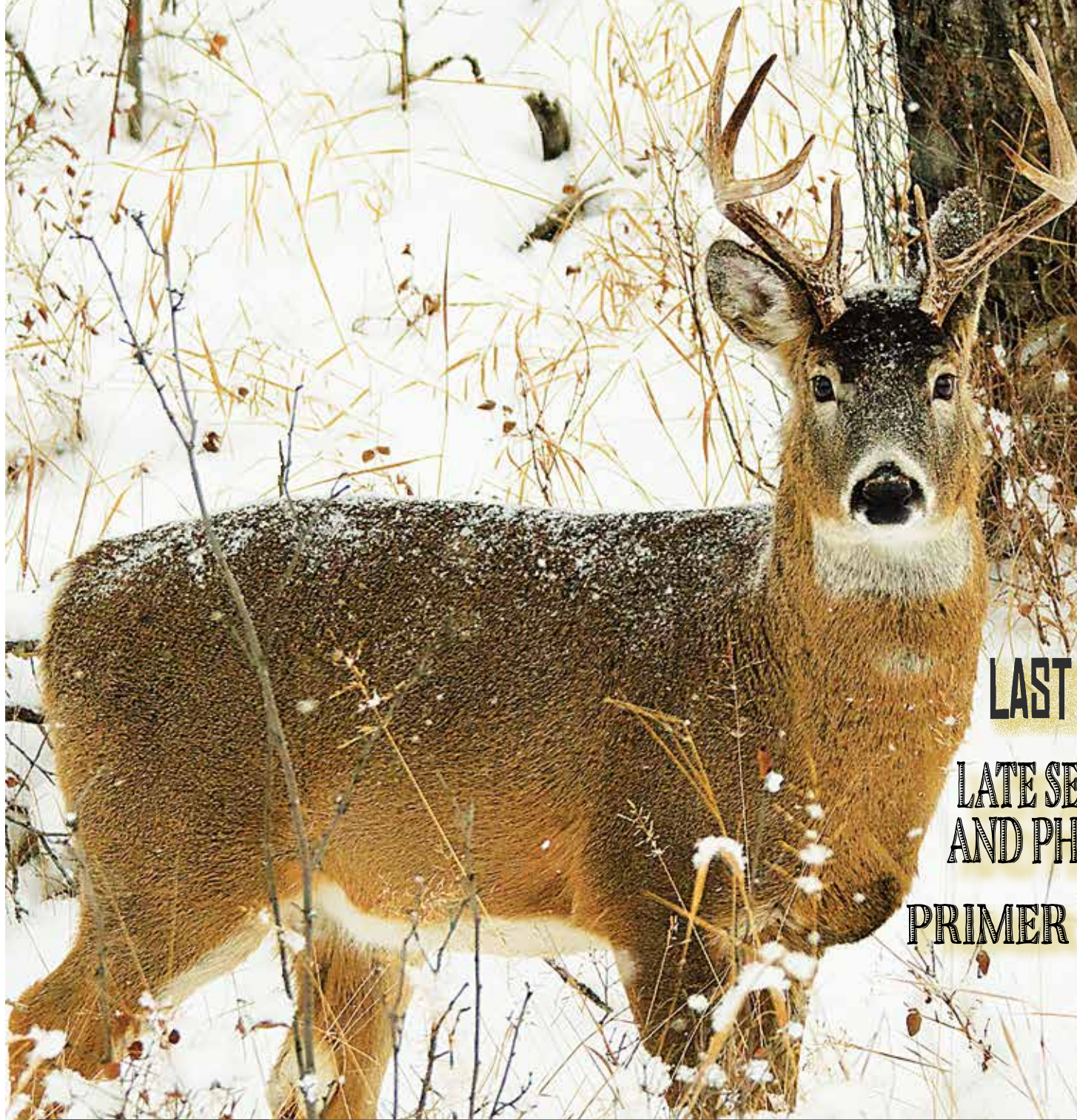


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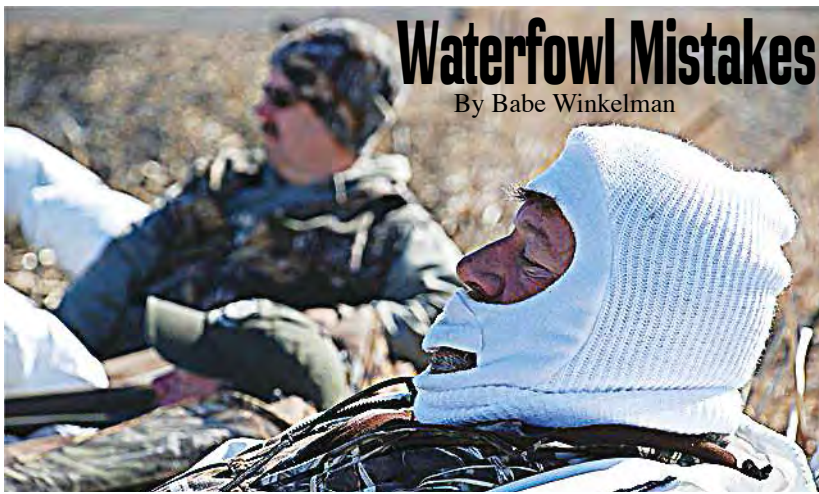


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Waterfowl Mistakes

By Babe Winkelman

From countless early mornings, sleepless nights, and endless preparation, it all comes down to that moment you raise, pulling that trigger at the birds cupped over your decoys that make it all worth being a waterfowler. From die-hards to beginners, waterfowl hunting has a long, rich tradition that takes place in your favorite field, pond, lake, river, or reservoir. Like others I have made many mistakes over my years of hunting, especially waterfowl. I want to share a few of those mistakes with you, so you don't make the same ones.

The most common mistake I have made over the years is calling too much. When I saw ducks I would get on the call thinking it would make the birds take a one way trip over to my decoys. Boy was I wrong. I found out more times than not that I was actually spooking the birds and not getting an opportunity to pull the trigger. These days, I am more resourceful with the call and let the birds reactions tell me what they want. If they like the sweet tune coming out of the barrel of my call I will continue to blow my call in that manner. On the other hand, if I notice the birds getting wary or spooking from my call I will put the call down or try a different rhythm. Ultimately you need to find what works on the birds that particular day and stick to it. Someday the birds may be responsive to the call, while other days they don't want anything to do with it. So keep in mind that sometimes less calling can actually help you be more successful.

Another mistake I have made time and time again is not leaving a clear landing zone for the birds in my decoy spread. I would throw out decoys in a random pattern and not take into consideration that the birds need a place to land. This means as birds came over to check out my spread they would circle a time or two but never commit all because they had no place to land. Now days I take more pride in strategically placing my decoys, making sure the birds have a clear landing zone downwind of my main group of decoys leaving me with perfect shot opportunities. From the years of observing birds, I try to replicate my decoy spread to match a real flock of birds; usually meaning my decoy spreads are U, V, or J patterns. If a pronounced landing zone is present, you drastically increase your chances of being prosperous during any hunt, remember that.

The last mistake, at least that I am going to share with you, is not remaining totally still. Myself included, get so excited at the sight and sound of waterfowl that it is almost irresistible not to move. Moving my head side to side searching the sky for incoming birds was a common mistake for me during every hunt until I realized that birds were flaring or keeping their distance, as this head moving motion exposed my face producing a glare. This was leaving me with very poor results hunt after hunt. Even with well concealed blinds and excellent camouflage it is important to keep your movement to a minimum especially when birds are working the decoys. To keep myself from flaring bird these days I watch with only my eyes eliminating unwanted head movement. Stay still, stay low, stay concealed and the next thing you know the birds won't know what hit them.

Learn from these three mistake and implement correct techniques which will help make you a more successful waterfowler. One last thing is check the rules and regulations pertaining to your state as bag limits, season dates, and special regs are constantly being changed from year to year. Good Hunting.

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DECEMBER BIG GAME HUNTING!

Late Season Hunting
Opportunities in
HD 212, 260, 290 & 309

MONTANA LATE SEASON HUNTS

By Hunting & Fishing News Pro Staff

Hunting for deer and some brow-tined or antlerless elk hunts still exist here in Montana for late season hunters. It's bow hunting or primitive weapons areas for those with general season unfilled tags.

Did you get out and hunt enough? If not, and you're willing to tough out the harsh elements and maybe do a little traveling, you can put some steaks in the freezer this month, though limited.

Once again, deer numbers are down in most areas, although slowly rebounding a bit it seems, and in past seasons you could expect damage hunt opportunities, especially for whitetailed deer on the river bottoms in Eastern Montana. However, with the outbreaks of EHD in recent years, don't expect any this season. There may be damage elk hunts in certain areas. Check with Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks for any late news to come out in December. Make sure you read the Montana Hunting Regulations for opportunities that may exist for you. Here are some we have found.

HD Unit 212 - North Flint Ridge There is a large amount of good country to hunt in this district, and it is one of the best options to fill a late-season tag.

Deer: Either sex whitetail deer. Archery only. Prison Ranch only area.

Elk: Brow-tined bull or antlerless elk. Archery only. Prison Ranch archery only.

Open through January 1, 2015.

HD Unit 260 - Bitterroot - Clark Fork Archery District Mostly private land. The access is difficult. You may have to knock on a few doors, but there are plenty of deer to hunt in these river bottom areas.

Deer: Either sex - whitetail. Archery only.

Elk: Brow-tined bull elk. Archery only. Valid for BTB-Elk only in that portion of the HD west of Highway 93 - Missoula County.

Either sex elk. Archery only. **NOT** valid in that portion of the HD west of Highway 93 in Missoula County and **NOT** valid on Lee Metcalf Refuge.

Open through January 15, 2015.

HD Unit 290 - Helmville - Ovando Archery District

This area offers another good opportunity to fill a tag, with plenty of quality deer and elk hunting available.

Deer: Antlered buck mule deer. Archery only.

Either sex whitetail deer. Archery only.

Season ends December 15, 2014.

Elk: Brow-tined bull or antlerless elk. Archery only.

Season ends January 1, 2015

HD Unit 309 - Gallatin Valley - WRA

Deer and elk hunting is restricted to archery equipment, shotgun, traditional handgun, muzzleloader or crossbow only, except on private lands, which are excluded from the weapons restriction. Map area available at FWP Region 3 in Bozeman or call 406-994-4042.

Deer: Antlerless whitetail deer only.

Elk: Antlerless elk only.

December 1, 2014 - January 15, 2015.

REMEMBERING THE JORDAN BUCK

The Boone and Crockett Club

Jordan Buck Key Measurements:

- 53-7/8 inches of mass/circumference
- 30-inch mainbeams on both sides
- G1-G4 measurements: 7, 13, 10 and 7 inches
- Only 3-2/8 inches in symmetry deductions

Ninety-nine deer seasons have passed since James Jordan pulled the trigger on a gargantuan whitetail that would become one of the best-known trophies of all time – and still stands as the biggest typical buck ever taken in the U.S.

With the 100th Anniversary...in November, the Boone and Crockett Club is pausing to remember a tale that remains the stuff of legends.

"You know a deer hunt has reached legendary status when the local community plans a centennial celebration," said Keith Balfour, marketing director for the Club...

Balfour said, "The popularity of hunting in North America, and the institutions of sustainable use conservation that hunting supports, rest on the shoulders of the whitetail deer. The Boone and Crockett Club is proud to help celebrate the history, legacy and significance of this deer as well as the man who brought it to the attention of hunters and conservationists around the world."

The Jordan Buck tale at a glance:

1914 – Nov. 20, Jordan, 22, hunts with a friend along the Yellow River near Danbury, Wis. Jordan kills a doe. His friend agrees to drag the doe home while Jordan continues the hunt. Jordan tracks a deer into a patch of high grass near a railroad. An approaching train flushes a big buck. Jordan fires, follows the wounded animal and finally drops it as it crosses to the opposite side of the river. Amazed locals estimate the buck's weight at close to 400 pounds. A local taxidermist offers to mount the head for \$5. Jordan agrees. Later he discovers the taxidermist has moved away leaving no trace of his trophy.

1964 – In a strange twist a half-century later, a distant relative of Jordan's buys a massive but crude deer mount at a rummage sale in Sandstone, Minn., for \$3. Jordan is certain it's his long-lost buck. The new owner requests an official scoring by Boone and Crockett. The Club scores the antlers at 206-5/8 and confirms it as the new World's Record typical whitetail but, unable to verify Jordan's story, lists the hunter as unknown and the hunt area as Sandstone, Minn.

1968 – The rack is sold to an antler collector in New Hampshire for \$1,500. The trophy is remounted with a new cape.

1977 – Following outdoor writer Ron Schara's story about the buck in the Minneapolis Star Tribune, the Boone and Crockett Club re-opens investigation into Jordan's claim.

1978 – Boone and Crockett officials confirm the story and officially recognize Jordan as the hunter and Burnett County, Wis., as the location taken. Sadly, Jordan had passed away two months earlier.

1993 – After 29 years at the top of Boone and Crockett records, the Jordan Buck is overtaken by Milo Hanson's 213-5/8 buck from western Saskatchewan, Canada.

2001 – Bass Pro Shops acquires the Jordan Buck mount for an undisclosed sum. The buck is now part of a touring collection of trophies and seen annually by thousands of sportsmen.

2013 – Through the 99 deer seasons from 1914 through 2013, Wisconsin produced 1,057 typical whitetails in Boone and Crockett records – 324 more than second-place Illinois.

2014 – 100th Anniversary of Jordan's landmark buck.

"When we deer hunters dream whitetail, we dream big, typical five-by-fives. That's the most common and sought after antler configuration for the species. The Jordan Buck certainly exceeds that which dreams are made of," Balfour concluded...



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Season's over, Now What?

Written by Will Jenkins - TheWilltoHunt.com

Now that deer season is over or wrapping up for most people we're left with what to do for the rest of the winter until it heats up and we can shoot fish, turkey or foam. Here are a few suggestions to keep you and your equipment busy!

1. Get good deals on hunting stuff! Right now many stores...are selling stands and other equipment at anywhere from 25% up to 70% off! If you live in an area with several be sure to stop by each and see what's in stock and how low they are marked. The top items that are usually marked down are hang on stands, ladder stands, trail cameras and scent eliminator along with some clothing.

2. See who survived. Get those trail cameras out and see what deer made it through the season. This is one of my favorite times to have trail cameras out. It also helps you time your shed hunting season and understand how deer are using the property in the late season.

3. Get your bow geared up. Right now you have plenty of time to get your strings and cables replaced or sight in that new sight. You'll be able to get all of that done and still be drilling x's by the time turkey season, bow fishing or 3D season kicks in. Or you can always upgrade to a new 2015 model and have it ready to roll as well!

4. Shoot indoors. Check with local archery shops and see if they have an indoor league or techno hunt. It's good fun and great practice.

5. Practice. Just because it's cold out doesn't mean you shouldn't be practicing. For one it's fun and two it's great for relieving the stress of not being able to actually hunt! Even if you don't have any of the above stuff to do you can always practice and try to improve your form, range or accuracy.

I should probably have made a number 6 that involved getting done all the "Honey-Do's" that were neglected for the last few months but what fun would that be. What are you doing now to prepare for next season?



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Idaho Steelhead Heating Up!

By H & F News Pro Staff

It's cold outside, but the fishing is just heating up for Idaho's famed steelhead "B" run now on the Clearwater and Snake Rivers this month.

River flows in the Clearwater and Snake Rivers may drop, but that doesn't mean the fishing will slow, and this could be the best time to be on the water here in December.

Where: Fish the Kooskia, Kamiah area near Orifino with good action historically from about 10 miles above the Orifino Bridge down to Lenore, which is about 15 miles downriver from Orifino.

When: With recent steelhead counts at the Lower Granite Dam bound for Idaho's rivers exceeding 50,000 fish, this is easily one of the better steelhead runs we have seen in a while. Now is the best time to be on the bank or in a boat.

How: To catch these sport fish, options include bouncing jigs along the bottom. A lot of anglers use the jigs solo; some use bobber set-ups. This can be anywhere between 3 and 25 feet, depending on how deep the hole is. You can also use a scented jig or one tipped with roe or shrimp tail. Trout beads in different colors - pink, orange, reds and yellows under the bobber are most effective.

Drift fishing is also another technique. This method requires bouncing a corkie and yarn or roe offering near the bottom weighted with a piece of pencil lead or a "slinky."

Fly fishing with a large strike indicator works just like it does in Montana's rivers and lakes when nymph fishing for trout, only you are using larger gear, line and rod. This works great if you are limited to fishing from the bank.

Why: Steelhead don't run up river in freight train fashion like spring chinook do, so targeting steelhead where they may rest or hang out for days or weeks can be quite productive. That is what is going on now in these rivers. The dream and the adrenaline rush you get from hooking into one of these "B" run monsters is what sport fishing is all about, and delivers to you. PLUS, those deep orange fillets cut into two beautiful pieces is pretty gratifying as well.



Idaho Fish & Game Map

Bringing More Steelhead To Boise River

Idaho Fish And Game



IF&G Photo

Idaho Fish and Game will stock approximately 300 steelhead in the Boise River Wednesday, November 12.

The fish will be released in the river from the Glenwood Bridge to Barber Park. Because of their size - six to 12 pounds - the actual number of steelhead stocked will depend on the capacity of the tanker truck hauling the fish from Oxbow Hatchery on the Snake River.

Besides a fishing license, anglers hoping to tangle with one of the hatchery steelhead need a \$12.75 steelhead permit, good for 20 fish. Though required in other steelhead waters, barbless hooks are not required for Boise River steelhead angling.

All steelhead stocked in the Boise River will lack an adipose fin (the small fin normally found immediately behind the dorsal fin). Boise River anglers catching a rainbow trout longer than 20 inches that lacks an adipose fin should consider the fish a steelhead.

Any steelhead caught by an angler without a valid steelhead permit must immediately be returned to the water. Steelhead limits on the Boise River are three fish per day, nine in possession and 20 for the fall season.

For information about the Boise River steelhead release, contact the Fish and Game Nampa office at 208-465-8465 or check the Fish and Game website at <http://fishandgame.idaho.gov>.

ADVERTISING RICK HAGGERTY (406) 370-1368

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SELECTING AN UNDERWATER CAMERA SYSTEM FOR ICE FISHING

By Dr. Jason Halfen thetechnologicalangler.com

Our ability as anglers to understand fish behavior and habitat is directly coupled to our use of modern technological tools. For example, while the first consumer sonar units of the late 1950s opened the door to structure fishing, modern innovations like Side Imaging, Down Imaging, and 360 Imaging provide contemporary anglers with an incredible abundance of information that could not be imagined by previous generations...

The most successful hardwater anglers are those that are mobile, constantly hunting for active fish. Mobility on the ice demands gear that is easily transported, particularly during the first ice period when heavy gear gets left on shore.

For these, or any times when an ice angler operates in search-and-destroy mode, the Aqua-Vu Micro 5 is the perfect choice for underwater viewing. This camera system packs a host of powerful features into an incredibly small package, easily fitting into the front pocket of your favorite ice fishing bibs.

The acorn-sized optics feature a one-million pixel, full-color camera for sharp detail under a wide variety of water and lighting conditions. The Aqua-Vu Micro 5 includes a 5" LCD display with a flip up sunshield for easy viewing, as well as a long-life lithium ion power pack for those ice trips that extend through a full day. An integrated 8 GB DVR makes recording your underwater videos a snap, so you can relive and share your ice fishing memories with family and friends. All of these features are packed into a rugged housing that weighs 1.3 pounds...your fully-stocked ice fishing jig box weighs more!

The portability of the Aqua-Vu Micro 5 is enhanced with the new Micro-Mobile Pro Viewing Case (available in December), the first wearable underwater camera holster. This accessory allows the ice angler to keep one hand free for jigging while still enjoying live camera views from beneath the ice.

There are times, however, when weather conditions or a precision bite demand that we hunker down in a portable or hard-sided shelter. When space and portability are not primary concerns, I opt for a different camera system with a larger view screen so I can share the excitement of the underwater world with my kids or others in the shelter. At these times, the Aqua-Vu 760 cz system, with its 7" LCD monitor, becomes my underwater camera of choice.

I position the camera optics, housed within in a sunfish-shaped "decoy" to avoid spooking wary predators, using the Aqua-Vu Mo-Pod to ensure that I have both hands free to fish when the mid-winter crappies start to crash the weedlines. The versatile camera body allows for traditional horizontal viewing or for down-viewing, allowing me to position the optics above the feeding zone and see fish interacting with my bait from all directions.

If your ice fishing occurs from within a hard-sided palace equipped with modern creature comforts, the video out port of the Aqua-Vu 760cz allows you to connect your Aqua-Vu 760cz to your in-house entertainment system, so that everyone in your palace can enjoy a big-screen Aqua-Vu performance...

Aqua-Vu camera systems provide anglers with powerful technological tools to better understand fish habitat and behavior, resulting in more successful and enjoyable hard-water adventures. Choose the right Aqua-Vu system for your style of fishing, and enjoy the show!



Modern underwater camera systems deliver an unprecedented amount of information to ice anglers, putting more fish on the ice and more smiles on faces.
Photo by Bill Lindner

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My Response To An Anti-Hunter

By Jason Reid ammoland.com

After killing the biggest buck of my life last fall, my school, Houghton College posted a picture of me and the deer on their Facebook page. One lady whom we will call Mrs. B commented on the picture.

Mrs. B: "Not a fan of this at all! Hope the buck had a painless death – doubt it though! Sad!"

This felt like a critical moment at least in my young career as a hunter. How would I stand up for myself and my culture under questioning? Many exchanges between hunters and anti-hunters ends in unproductive rhetoric. Just look in the comments section of any YouTube video. Is explaining ourselves even worth the time to people who don't want to listen? Also debatable.

But for the first time in my life, someone was questioning my way of life, and a completed goal. As an ambassador for our culture, I did the only thing I knew, I wrote.

Here was my response:

(Written in a very calm, caring, no anger in my voice.) Mrs. B, I understand your dislike and possible anger towards what I did. It is understandable and everyone is entitled to their opinion and I respect yours and those of all non hunters although I clearly disagree. Just to clear the air on a few things.

Before I get going- the first thing I did when found him, I knelt in the muddy tangled brush, removed my hat and prayed, giving thanks to God. I cried, not out of pride but out of thanks to God for giving me a chance at this deer. These intimate moments connect you with the real world, mother nature- the full circle of life. This deer expired quickly, less than a minute. In fact because I was using a bow and arrow, his death was far less painful than a bullet or how mother nature would have killed him.

Ever see a deer die from Blue Tongue? A disease where the deer's tongue swells up and they cannot drink, thus killing them slowly from dehydration. How about having their leg tendons cut by a predator like a wolf, bear or coyote and having their gut ripped open and then is eaten alive. Mother nature is ugly, painful and brutal.

A natural death like so many non hunters hope for is misunderstood. Just because the word natural is in the phrase does not mean it is quiet and painless. There is far more pain, far more anguish and stress on the animal. How about a car? Deer accidents are brutal, I've seen far too many deer squirming around on the road after being smashed, not to mention it puts other people in danger. My arrow took him fast and painless.

Due to my razor sharp arrow head, he had no idea what had hit him. In fact, he continued on his causal business until he fell over. If you have ever cut yourself with a razor you will know a razor cut bleeds fast but is clean and painless. Same concept.

Now another area I should touch on is about the "trophy".

Yes, my buck is big, actually huge, they rarely grow that size here in New York because so many people take deer when they are small. (continued)



Author Jason Reid with his Megatron Loyd

People hate the word trophy because of the idea that people like me are only out after the antlers. Not the case. He weighed well over 200 pounds providing myself, family and friends with over 100 pounds of fresh venison, far healthier than the meals I get at a restaurant. A trophy is in the eye of the beholder, regardless of the size, every animal is a trophy to the person. If you want to think about trophy hunting one way, in the words of one of my good friends and mentors, Archery legend Dennis Dunn, he writes in his book Barebow: An Archer's Fair Chase Taking of North America's 29 Big Game Species, (<http://tiny.cc/e6v9ox>).

"Trophy hunting is actually the purest form of hunting since we are not shooting the first animal we see, we are waiting for the oldest, wisest and smartest of the species."

I have let countless deer pass over the years in order to promote the well being of the herd by not shooting the future. There is also an incredible challenge in taking one of the oldest animals. These big bucks are smart, darn smart. I am pitting my mind as a human against the best of the species. This chess game is addicting. It is the ultimate way to stay in touch with our primal senses. I am connected to the pulse of life and understand just how quickly life can be taken.

This deer was on his way out, he was over the hump so to speak. He was a perfect animal to take out of the herd for many reasons I do not have time to explain. Being undetected watching animals in their habitat is a rush you must experience for yourself.

Hunting in general has kept me out of trouble and even led to opportunities for employment. This is not a sad event, rather a happy event, a celebration of life.

To have won the ultimate chess match, to be able to provide lean meat for myself and to be able to help the deer herd as a whole. What more can a college student ask for? The head and antlers will be mounted on my wall not for pride but as a reminder of the time and effort I have put in chasing deer and the love I have for these animals. Yes, I said it, I LOVE ANIMALS, myself and fellow hunters love and care more for animals and the lands than any self proclaimed animal lover. If you need proof, look at the amount of time, effort and money spent on conservation by the hunting community...

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however is that tipping the lure with soft plastics in some cases adds a little flash, a little movement as the hook swings. If the lure is moving and the strikes are aggressive, anglers have discovered that the presentation doesn't have to taste or smell good. The fish don't get a chance to analyze. This is the key to fishing with soft plastics. Sticking a soft plastic perch eye or minnow head imitation below a slip bobber and letting the hook sit is not going to catch much. If you are going to just sit and wait, use live bait. If however you work the lure however and can analyze the response of the fish with electronics, soft plastics can work better than live bait. Heres why: Soft plastics are much more durable and in some cases have as good or better action.

So often, I just use a pinched off minnow head below spoons or swim lures. Reason I like the pinched off head is because I feel like my batting average is higher on hook sets. The fish come in on the lure and hit the lure. With just a minnow head, the hook is in the mouth of a fish. There are times when a full minnow will flop more and trigger fish that are a bit tougher and there are also times when fish want the larger profile of a whole minnow so it pays to experiment.

Situations where the fish want the lure pounded hard and want the lure moving are perfect situations to replace traditional live bait with soft plastics. When fish are smoking high lift fall flutter spoon presentations, when the walleyes are punching horizontal swim lures and spoons that are getting pounded, that is the time to experiment away from bait. Last winter, I had days on Devils Lake where I caught over twenty walleyes on one Impulse Perch Eye tipped onto a Buckshot Rattle Spoon. A bag of Impulse lasts me a week.

The reality is that these trends have been happening a long time in isolated regions for both perch and walleye. Bead spoons for example have long had a following for aggressive, shallow water walleyes on Great Lakes fisheries. The bead is just a touch of color, a little flash and the concept is similar to tipping an Impulse Perch Eye on to a Buckshot Rattle Spoon. A mistake many anglers make is thinking that "their fish" on the lakes they fish are not aggressive enough for these baitless presentations.

I have heard all the reasons. "Our lakes are tougher." "That is just a Saginaw Bay thing or the walleyes on Devils Lake are much more aggressive." "Red Lake walleyes will eat anything but our fish are harder." There are truths to certain fisheries and ecosystems having specific traits that make them more or less conducive for certain presentations no doubt. Here is the other reality however that many anglers don't understand. We often think of ourselves as adapting to the fish but the truth is fish also adapt to us. If we fish with finesse and assume the bite is going to be tough and fish for nonaggressive fish, we will find the non aggressive tough biters. If you don't fish aggressively or at least give the fish that option at times, you will not see aggressive fish. Very rarely do you ever see an aggressive response from fish with passive presentations.

There are so many times where the fish want the lure moving, they lose interest if you back off the tempo or cadence. Electronics have taught us that. A pretty solid game plan is to start out with an aggressive presentation especially during prime time windows like sunrise and sunset or when fishing new water. Assume that there will be some aggressive fish and cover water to find them. Soft plastic options shine for this. Not only do you cover more water by fishing multiple holes but you also cover more water below the hole by working the lure in a fashion where it can be seen, felt and heard from greater distances. Soft plastics stay on the hook during this process.

There are times when these lures can and will catch fish without tipping at all. I have often had more luck with walleyes with Chubby Darters without tipping the lure. Rattle baits also work well without tipping. Traditional horizontal swim lures like Puppet Minnows and Jigging Raps can be fished with no bait. Spoons, especially flutter spoons can be worked without being tipped. On some western reservoirs in Montana, Wyoming and Colorado, anglers are catching walleyes ripping large flutter spoons like the PK Flutter Fish.

Fishing lures for ice time walleyes with no bait is a leap for some ice anglers. The soft plastic tipping options available to ice anglers today kind of bridge the two worlds. I think it is safe to say that most winter walleye anglers learned to fish with the traditional minnow and bobber routine, eventually graduating to tipping a minnow onto a spoon. The next leap is using a lure and trusting in the action of that lure to trigger fish. Now don't think that one mindset is better or more advanced because that is a mistake some anglers make. By getting confident however with these different fishing styles, you will have another arrow in your quiver. There will always be times when an angler has to break out live bait but what will surprise many anglers is how often you don't need live bait. What also surprises some anglers is just how much fun these walleye bites can be.



OBSERVATIONS ON THE ICE WALLEYE SCENE

By Jason Mitchell
www.jasonmitchelloutdoors.com

Many trends and mindsets that originate over the open water season eventually transform on to the ice scene. There was a time when walleye anglers had a hard time putting anything on a jig besides a shiner. Today, soft plastic and water soluble soft baits have traction with the walleye crowd. The soft plastic replacing live bait trend has slowly gained a foothold on the ice walleye world. Just like open water, soft plastics will never replace live bait but they are a great compliment and with certain situations and applications, work much better.

For ice anglers, many of the productive soft plastic options for walleye are merely tipping agents. Anglers are using lures where they traditionally tip the lure with either a minnow or minnow head. Now nothing smells or tastes as good as the real thing. What many ice anglers have discovered

The author Jason Mitchell with a great walleye caught with a Salmo Zipper. Aggressive presentations that incorporate soft plastics or no bait continue to push the bar of winter walleye fishing.

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HOLIDAY GIFT GUIDE

By H & F News Pro Staff

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HOLIDAY GIFT GUIDE

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Guide-Proven Walleye Plays For Early Ice

Legendary walleye guide Tom Neustrom shares strategies for first-ice 'eyes

By Jason Herter

Fish with Tom this winter 218-327-2312

The venison is neatly wrapped in butcher paper, labeled and squirreled away in the freezer; the orange outfit retired for ice fishing bibs and slip-on cleats. In a perfect world, there's little snow and good, clean ice is forming throughout the Ice Belt.

Whether you call ice fishing's honeymoon phase "early ice" or "first ice," one thing is certain: it's hard to beat, especially for walleyes.

Grand Rapids, Minnesota-based guide Tom Neustrom encourages anglers to hit up fall walleye spots during early ice – could be deep, shallow or somewhere in between. Simply, if you caught walleyes there in October or November, chances are they won't be too far away.

"Typically, walleyes move to deep-water structure in the late fall – points, islands, steep breaks, deep weed edges – so that's always a good place to look. But don't limit yourself to textbook spots and traditional wisdom. This October and November, I was catching walleyes shallower than usual in 8-14 feet," says Neustrom.

To ensure he can put clients on fish from day one of ice, Neustrom does a fair share of late, open-water scouting.

"I use my Humminbird 999ci HD SI to locate structure and fish in late fall, setting waypoints for first ice. Pop a blank SD card into the 999, save the waypoints to the card, transfer the card to the 688ci HD Ice Combo and save the spots to the machine. That way I can still use my LakeMaster card, too."

One of the great things about late-fall walleye fishing is the great day bite. But during first ice, that's not always the case.

"There can still be sediment in the water from the wave action of fall, which definitely extends the bite window from morning into afternoon. Same goes for darker, more turbid prairie lakes or the bog-stained, tannic waters of the north. But if the water's clear, low-light periods are best; I'll choose to fish early morning or the last two hours of afternoon into evening."

Two other significant factors are ice thickness and snow cover.



Late-fall scouting is one of the keys to Neustrom's early-ice program. He marks optimal weeds with Humminbird Side Imaging, saving waypoints on a blank SD card that he'll transfer to his Humminbird ICE 688ci HD unit.

"Be quieter during early season – the ice is thinner and transmits more noise. Second, if you have clear ice, it's going to be hard to sit in 6 or 7 feet of water and catch walleyes. Combine the two and it can be really tough, so I like to scout out spots where there's snow pack and decreased light. Cloudy days can help tremendously, especially on shallower or clear waters."

In terms of location, Neustrom says anglers can hedge their bets by fishing around the edges of still green weeds, like cabbage.

"Green weeds produce oxygen and attract life. You'll find the whole food chain: micro-invertebrates, baitfish, panfish, predators ... The cool thing about that is you get a mixed bag. You might pick up walleyes during the low-light periods and panfish and pike during the day.

Great place to set up shop with the family," says Neustrom.

Once again, Neustrom typically has a slew of waypoints set before stepping foot on the ice. "In fall, I like to scout with Side Imaging to find large weedbeds, setting waypoints all along the edges and any pockets, funnels or points in the weeds. Then I motor over and verify my marks with 2D sonar. If the water's clear, I can tell if the weeds are still green. Or cast into them, intentionally snagging vegetation to get a closer look. An Aqua-Vu underwater camera also works wonder for scouting weeds."

Neustrom confides the weed-program is an ace he keeps up his sleeve for trips with clients. "Add clear water and minimal snow cover and I'm headed to weededges – or deeper rock in 12-16 feet. Both places offer excellent cover and ambush spots for walleyes. Don't just head for that first deep breakline."

"Having powerful GPS mapping and sonar all in one unit is key. I simply pop in my card with late-fall waypoints, save those to the unit and then use my LakeMaster card to further identify areas with Depth Highlight. Then it's all digital flasher or graph screen to catch 'em!"

Given Minnesota's two lines per angler regulation, Neustrom says jigging is his core program, although he'll stack the odds by using a nearby tip-up or dead stick. He fishes aggressively with a single tip-up by drilling eight or 10 holes, moving the rig hole-to-hole every half-hour or so.

"I treat the tip-up like a 'silent partner' that I can move around to test new waters – shallower, deeper, on an inside turn, whatever. It'll tell me pretty quick where I should move to jig, too." Neustrom's preference lies with traditional wooden rail-style tip-ups for their reliability and ease-of-use.

"I also like to use heavier test braid, which doesn't get tangled as easily or cut and freeze into the ice. For pike, I prefer 60- 80-pound; for walleyes, 20-pound, something like Suffix 832. Then it's a small barrel swivel and an 8-pound fluoro leader for walleyes or a 20-pound fluoro leader for pike. Hook size all comes down to the size of your bait, but I tend to go smaller with hooks wherever possible for walleyes. This minimizes the tendency to reject and spit the bait."

Neustrom is also fond of adding a small glow bead above the hook, which he says can make the difference in some situations, especially darker waters.

"One of the biggest mistakes anglers make is letting their bait get too wild. Position the right size and weight split-shot on the leader to act as a fulcrum to pin the bait and define a strike window. You've gotta remember, a fish's metabolism slows in winter. If that bait is freaking out, swimming everywhere, the fish might just decide it's too much work for the calories."

Another mistake Neustrom says walleye anglers make is not maintaining their tip-ups. "Always check the trip mechanism and make sure line flows easily off the spool. Too much resistance—or split shots that are too heavy—and that walleye's going to spit the bait."

Another flaw in most anglers' tip-up programs is what he calls "operating distance." In other words, don't position your 'silent partner' too far away.

(continued on page 21)

BECOME A BETTER WINGSHOOTER



By Bob Humphrey
Yamaha Outdoors Tips

It's one of those special days. The birds are flying well providing plenty of wingshooting action for everyone in the group. But as the morning winds on, a noticeable disparity gradually emerges. While some shooters are reveling in their success, others are growing increasingly disappointed with their inability to hit a moving target.

If you've ever found yourself among the latter group, you know how frustrating it can be. Fortunately, the situation can be easily remedied by following a few basic guidelines.

1) Target Acquisition - Lock your eyes on the target and don't take them off until it drops. Don't look for the bead on the end of your barrel, look through it at the bird.

2) Forehand First - Your gun should already be close to mounted before the flush. Move your forward hand toward the target first to avoid too much barrel pivot and up and down movement.

3) Wood to Wood - Mount the gun firmly to your face - under your cheek bone, with less concern for where it meets your shoulder. Practice this to achieve a consistent mount for greater accuracy.

4) Don't Rush - Avoid harsh, sudden movements. The mount should be slow, smooth and steady. Moving at a comfortable pace ensures a more precise, consistent mount.

All of the above will help, but nothing trumps practice. Spend time at the local skeet range or load the ATV up with a box of clays and a hand-thrower and head afield before, during and after the season to keep, develop and retain better shooting habits.



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

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2014 Fall Mack Days - Cynthia Bras

A lake trout with a tag valued at \$10,000 was caught by Felix Gauci on Saturday and was cause for lots of excitement in the 2014 Fall Mack Days Fishing event during the 5th weekend of the event. Felix was surprised to find out he had the tagged fish in his cooler as his fish were counted in.

Congratulations to all that fished 2014 Fall Mack Days.

be closer to January, unless we get a prolonged deep freeze in December. Target weed beds around the lake for the best action here.

LOWER STILLWATER LAKE 15 miles north of Whitefish, you can normally set up your ice huts by mid-to-late December along the lake's shorelines. Target the north bank area for perch, northern pike, and trout using small jigs tipped with pink maggots for perch, and smelt on pike hooks for northern pike. Pike spearing is allowed.

CARPENTER LAKE 3 miles west of Eureka, you'll find Tetrault or (Carpenter) Lake, which holds a few dandy rainbow trout and largemouth bass. Fish the shallows about the 6 foot depth to start, using a small jig, slowly twitching it to attract fish. Maggots or worms work well.

MURPHY LAKE 20 miles south of Eureka, you can target bass and perch using the same methods over ice. Look for schools of 10 to 12 inch perch here. The north end of the lake provides the best fishing action. There is a campground on the west side for overnighters.

ECHO LAKE Just north of Bigfork, anglers target the whitefish, perch, bass, trout and pike here on Echo Lake. Use smelt for northern pike, and Swedish Pimples baited with maggots for the perch and trout. Zimmer's Rattlesnakes will work to catch the whitefish here. Kokanee salmon can also be caught in this lake. Freeze up may be a bit later than the other lakes mentioned above, depending on the weather.

BROWN'S LAKE Brown's Lake should be one of the first to ice up should we get a mass cold spell for any extended period. This lake is located just off of Hwy. 200 near Ovando, and it can produce big trout through the ice, with not a lot of fishing pressure now. It's high-mountain fishing for sure. Try dropping small spoons, Swedish Pimples, or your favorite small lure to catch these trout. Nightcrawlers, maggots or corn can work to catch many good-sized fish here. Set up your tip-ups and expect plenty of early ice action here.

CLEARWATER AREA LAKES:

HARPER'S - PLACID - RAINY ALVA - SALMON - SEELEY

These high elevation lakes north of Hwy. 200 are some of your best bets for the early ice season conditions. These small lakes produce trout, kokanee, perch, northern pike and bass.

Placid Lake should be good if you are targeting the Kokanee, which will readily bite on a Glow Hook or small Swedish Pimple tipped with corn or maggots. If it's bigger fish you're after, head to Salmon or Seeley Lake for aggressive northern pike action. Fish along the weeded edges to target pike feeding on bait fish. Cut bait like smelt or herring just below the ice should attract these toothy critters. Spearing is open for the northern pike here. Perch can be caught jigging along the bottom.

It's the last hurrah for many open water fishing that exists in the Northern Rockies, as temperatures plummet and the ice begins to form in our mountain communities. By Christmas, most of our area lakes and reservoirs will be partially or totally frozen over and ice huts and augers will be out in full force.

Early Ice Action - Montana

The first ice is the best ice for two reasons. One, the ice is generally clear, void of air pockets and eroded areas, and two, the fish are biting!

If you are after a bit of early hardwater action, here are some ideas for "First Ice" fishing in Montana.

SMITH LAKE Located roughly 10 miles west of Kalispell on US Hwy. 2. Freeze up is normally mid-December. This lake holds perch, northern pike and trout. Tactics to catch perch include using a small yellow or chartreuse leadhead jig with a soft plastic tube jig body, a piece of worm, maggots, waxworms, or perch eyes. For northern pike, suspend a frozen smelt on a smelt hook below a bobber.

SPOON LAKE North of Columbia Falls you can hook into yellow perch, brook trout and smallmouth bass. Normal freeze up here will

In southwest Montana some of the rivers will run free all winter long, allowing for some great winter trout fishing and while most of these rivers stay open to fish, you'll want to check the Montana Fishing Regs on river closures that take effect December 1st until the third Saturday in May.

If you're going to fish over "First Ice" make sure it's safe before you go. For ice safety tips visit <http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/safety/ice/thickness.html>.

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NELSON RESERVOIR Keep plenty of minnows on hand as we head into ice-up, which can start to form here by mid-December. Target pike, walleye, and perch with tip-ups and sucker minnows as soon as the ice is safe. It can be the best fishing of the year, because the lake hasn't received a lot of pressure for about a month or so, and the fish will be fairly spread out. Good depth for walleye is about 12 to 15 feet, and for yellow perch and northerns, you will want to fish a bit more shallow waters. Look for the next deep freeze in December to really make the conditions just right here on this reservoir located near Malta.

EAST FORK RESERVOIR This Lewistown area reservoir will be targeted by area ice fishing anglers here in late December, mainly after yellow perch or walleye. White or yellow jigs tipped with waxworms or maggots in about the 20 foot water depth is most effective now. Small jigs 1/16-ounce size works well for the perch in a chartreuse pattern. If you can find a school of perch, some large ones can be had from 10 to 14 inches.

CANYON FERRY RESERVOIR

You may still be able to launch your boat and do some open water fishing until the lake freezes over, normally in mid-January. Target the hefty rainbow trout trolling copper and red spoons or silver Countdown Rapalas for the lakes population of pounder or better trout that are headed to the southern end of the lake now, where they will remain until freeze up. Most successful anglers are simply trolling their hardware and adjusting their depth with the speed of the trolling motor, working just 6 feet deep and prospecting down to around 15 feet deep until you find the actively feeding trout.

Shore anglers will see plenty of action at Confederate Bay or Duck Creek on the east side of the lake. The perch and trout will be most aggressive now, with a few lethargic walleye mixed in during the winter months. Late in December, with the ice starting to take over the lake, jigging works best.

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Guide Proven Walleye... (continued from page 18)

If I'm using a dead stick, I like it pretty close to me, like 10 feet or closer. The key is to respond quickly rather than chase it down. Same thing for a tip-up; I rarely set them more than 10 yards from where I'm jigging."

But Neustrom says he still catches the majority of his early-ice 'eyes actively jigging.

Neustrom says a small collection of Jigging Raps – size #5, #7 and #9 – cover all the bases during early-ice.

Tom's Go-To Bait "A Jigging Rap has a wide swing that most ice baits just don't have. Plus, it looks like a baitfish to attract fish from a distance and also displaces a lot of water, which walleyes can feel with their lateral line. Most of the time, you're getting hard aggression bites. It definitely brings out that kill instinct. Sometimes I'll add a scent component, too, by adding a minnow head to the center treble."



For anglers new to the Jigging Rap game, Neustrom suggests a small assortment of baits in the #5, #7 and #9 categories.

"The #5 excels for tough, finesse bites; the #7 is my standby; and the #9 is great for deeper water."

With respect to color, he suggests starting with something that resembles the prevalent forage base of where you're fishing.

In terms of rigging, Neustrom attaches a small barrel swivel to 8-pound mono main line and a 12- to 24-inch 6-pound Sufix fluorocarbon leader above the bait to combat line twist. He likes the addition of a Fast Snap or Quick Clip to attach the Jigging Rap.

"If you're spooling your reels with mono, use something soft. I like Sufix Elite, which is a little softer than a lot of lines. In the winter, we're often using reels that have a smaller spool and it's a tighter fit, which leads to more line memory if you're not using a soft mono," says Neustrom. Then, for waters 20 feet and deeper, Neustrom prefers braid for added sensitivity and its low-stretch characteristic, which provides quick and solid hooksets.

Although many anglers prefer a longer rod for fishing Jigging Raps, Neustrom sticks to 28 – 32-inch models that he can still fish in a portable shelter, typically medium-action with a little bit softer tip.

"When I'm fishing deeper I'll move to something with a little more backbone so I can get a better hookset," says Neustrom. "Obviously, you can go longer for fishing outside."

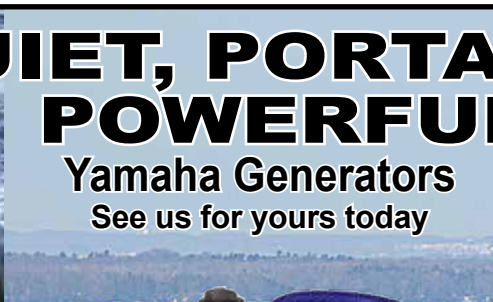
Ice Safety While Neustrom recommends fishing early ice for more walleyes, he's quick to stress the importance of proper ice fishing safety.

"First, make sure to check ice thickness to ensure safe travel whether on foot or an ATV. Be especially mindful of areas with current and don't get too brazen; no walleye is worth your life. I look for 4 inches before fishing on foot and 5 inches for ATVs. And by the time we have the foot of ice needed to sustain a truck, we're moving from early-ice into mid-winter strategies."

Neustrom recommends anglers look for areas of snow pack amidst clear ice. "Less light penetration provides a better ambush opportunity for fish—they're also less spooky when you're moving around on top."

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DUCK TIME SOLUTIONS

By Steve Hickoff, Yamaha Outdoors Tips

As a hardcore waterfowler, you spend a lot of time trying to solve challenges that migrating ducks bring your way. That's part of the fun. Sometimes problems occur when you're not giving the particular duck species what it wants.

Woodies like acorn-rich waters, somewhat aloof and often apart from other species. Numerous wood duck dekes may enhance the visual pleasure you have looking out on that spot, but a minimalist set of single-species pairs might be just right: hen and drake woodie. Or mostly drakes, say 3 to 5, with an odd hen in there. Don't push it.

Mallards mix well with other flooded field, marsh and river puddlers though. Three-dozen greenheads paired with susies and a few Pacific Flyway pintail, Central Flyway gadwall, plus wigeon and teal fakes isn't pushing it, geography depending. I hunt Atlantic Flyway inshore saltwater in the late-season; just a few matching pairs of common goldeneye fakes and a seagoing black duck or two bobbing in the low-tide cove works.



Decoys are only effective if the species you're hunting wants to be with the fakes in your spread. DU media photo

At other times, go big with your mix and match spread as the location dictates, hauling your gear there with a Yamaha ATV or Side-by-Side vehicle. What would you like to see if you were a duck? Take enough decoys with you to make it happen.

Maybe your single-species spread looks cold and uninviting. Throw some goose fakes in your mallard spread. Drop a few wigeon, pintails, black ducks and even shovelers in there. Coot fakes should be somewhere in your basement's waterfowling warehouse, and adding some to the overall look can work.

Are all your spots getting attention from other hunters too? No matter what flyway you hunt, pressure dictates waterfowl movement. To go with this seasonal flow, set small spreads on back-country rivers, streams, and creeks. Farm ponds. Beaver dam waters. Bust out ice if necessary in the pre-dawn. Put some loafing mallard fakes on the sandbar if available. Have woodies mixed in among deadfall beneath oaks. You may not kill a limit this way, but it's action when before you had none.

Okay, maybe your spots have all dried up as action goes. You've burned them out. Decoys don't matter. The ducks buzz on by, ignoring them.

Think wet. After major weather events, spots that once seemed useless to you as a waterfowler, now become prime. Hit those washed-out fields ASAP. If mallards are likely to use them, go armed with many decoys. Set up fakes on the periphery of your kill zone, but also close to your hide. Then load and be ready.



Flooded fields and swollen rivers hold ducks after major weather events. Be there. DU media photo



Mission Accomplished! Don, Jana and Bo

He Ain't Heavy, He's My Brother in Arms

Mark Holyoak
Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation

He struggled on all fours but continued climbing with the same dogged determination that marked his distinguished and honored military career. Bo Reichenbach, one of only two double amputee Navy SEALs in all of America, was scaling a steep coulee in Montana. Bo was 95 percent of the way to the top when Jim Kinsey, a former U.S. Marine, stepped in and lifted Reichenbach onto his back. He then powered his way step-by-step to the summit. It was truly an inspirational sight!

Reichenbach is from Billings, Mont. While serving our country on deployment to Afghanistan, he stepped on an IED on July 17, 2012. The explosion caused him to lose his left leg and his right leg below the knee as well as a 40 to 60 percent hearing loss and nerve damage in his right arm.

He received a Purple Heart just two weeks after returning home to the United States. He has undergone more than 20 different medical procedures since then and continues to recover on a daily basis. Bo also received the Bronze Star, the fourth-highest individual military award and the ninth-highest by order of precedence in the U.S. Military.

Reichenbach was in Montana to take part in his first ever elk hunt, arranged and paid for by the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation. (He visited RMEF headquarters just 13 months earlier.) Kinsey, executive producer and best known as 'Cameraman Jim,' was there to help capture it on video for Skullbound TV, a hunting television show hosted by Jana Waller.

Together, Bo, Jim, Jana, guide Jay Pribyl and Bo's father, Don, spent a memorable seven days chasing elk. They did so through incredibly steep, rough terrain.

"We dealt with a challenging landscape and awful weather but Bo's warrior heart and persistence was inspiring!" said Waller.

It turns out they needed every single day of the week-long hunt because it came down to the final day for Reichenbach to fill his tag with a 6x5 bull.

"Tears were shed by all when Bo finally connected on his bull," said Waller. "And when he made his way over, through the thick brush and trees, he wrapped his hands around the bull's antlers where he was missing his 3rd tine and said, 'Oh look! How cool! He's an amputee too!'"

Congrats Bo and thank you for your service and sacrifice!

(The episode is reportedly scheduled to air on Feb. 11 on Sportsman Channel.)



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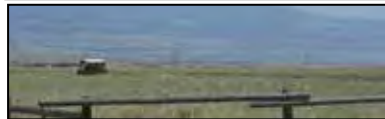
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To Kill Mature Bucks, Go Somewhere Else

By Lindsay Thomas Jr.

I had an interesting phone conversation with deer researcher Dr. Mark Conner while I was working on an article for Quality Whitetails. Mark, who works in Maryland, has led a number of recent groundbreaking studies of buck movements and home-range characteristics using GPS tracking collars placed on deer.

We were talking about "sanctuaries," and Mark told me about two distinct areas on his study site that have developed into safe zones with no hunting pressure, and how these two areas ended up being the core areas for several of the adult bucks being tracked.

These sanctuaries weren't created on purpose, Mark said. Hunting guides tried to place guests in or near these areas because cover is heavy and they knew mature bucks frequented these zones. But the guests often objected. They tended to want to be somewhere they could see a long way, so they could "see more deer." Stuck in a stand in heavy cover, they were unhappy. So, the guides altogether quit using these areas as stand sites, which further enhanced the sanctuary effect.

The irony here, of course, is that hunters equated seeing farther with seeing more deer, including mature bucks. Yet, as the researchers learned, these hunters stood a far greater chance of actually encountering a mature buck in the thicket, where they couldn't see very far.

This brought to mind related stories that always crop up whenever I'm thinking about hunting strategy and mature bucks.

Several years ago, before I worked at QDMA, I interviewed a teen-aged hunter who had killed an outstanding buck. His story also had an ironic twist. Hunting as a guest of his dad's club, the teenager had his heart set on a particular stand. When he rose before dawn the next morning, he hurried to the sign-in board to put a pin on the map, reserving the stand he wanted. But a club member appeared and pulled rank, removing the boy's "guest" pin and taking the stand for himself, as the rules allowed. The boy's father couldn't do anything about it, and there were no other "good" stands available. In frustration, the boy picked a random spot on the map, just outside of camp, and jabbed his pin into the board. Then he grabbed his climbing stand and rifle, straggled off into the dark into a tangled cutover bordering camp, and climbed the first large tree he came to. Shortly after sunup, a monstrous buck rose miraculously out of the cutover where it had been bedding, only a stone's throw outside camp.

Ah, sweet justice.

You've heard stories like this, I'm sure. The big bucks that get killed the first time a new stand is hunted. The hunter who gets lost and kills the best buck of his career. Or the "lucky" hunter who consistently kills mature bucks but doesn't fit in with his hunting peers because he doesn't hunt like they do. The common thread is hunters who think they know the best places to hunt, and they're wrong. Either they choose sites that aren't as good as they think they are, or they turn the best places into the worst places by hunting them – over and over again.

As hunters, we make all kinds of judgment errors in choosing where to hunt:

Some of us think seeing a long way equates to seeing more deer (sometimes it does, but not always).

Some of us think food plots are the best place to be (sometimes they are, but not always).

Some of us think a productive stand is bound to be just as productive tomorrow. This is just plain wrong, in my opinion. Consistently successful hunters agree: The chances of seeing a mature buck at a given stand decrease exponentially each time you hunt there without giving the site a lengthy rest.

And some of us look at cutovers, thickets, swamps or thorns and turn the other direction, toward that comfortable condo stand at the end of a four-wheeler trail.

The main mistake is in thinking we know what kind of landscape mature bucks prefer. Mainly, mature bucks prefer to be where we aren't. They do have their weaknesses, and if it wasn't for the rut, significantly fewer hunters would ever see adult bucks; but to consistently increase your chances of seeing them, identify your favorite stand – and go somewhere else.

This article is reprinted with permission from the website of Quality Deer Management Association (QDMA), a non-profit wildlife conservation organization dedicated to ensuring the future of white-tailed deer, wildlife habitat, and our hunting heritage. To learn more about deer hunting and managing deer habitat, visit www.QDMA.com.



Photo courtesy Montana Decoy

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Late season deer hunting can be challenging. The deer are shifting from "rut mode," back to feeding patterns and they are skittish from all the hunting pressure put on them during the last few months. Even though deer movements are more predictable, it can be hard to get a mature buck into bow range during December and January. With the tree bare and lack of cover around food sources, combined with the cautiousness displayed by bucks during the late season, filling a tag can be a frustrating endeavor. To help overcome the trials of post rut deer hunts, try using a decoy. It has many benefits.

Deer decoys attract and distract – both are critical advantages this time of year.

When hunting the large agricultural fields deer flock to when food is their main priority during the late season, a feeding doe decoy will send several "signals" to approaching deer. First, it communicates safety. Deer are most alert when feeding in open areas, but if there are other deer in the area, they have more confidence stepping into a field during legal shooting hours. Some deer hunters even add a few of our turkey decoys into their setup to promote a sense of security. A doe decoy can also attract a curious buck weeks after the peak of the rut who still has a strong urge to breed.

Mature deer are always looking for does that come into estrus late. These deer, survivors of the rut and gun seasons, are often mature deer. But they are also smart. **If you want your setup to represent a doe ready to breed, you need to sell it with calls and scents.** Apply doe-in-heat scent to the immediate area and use estrus bleats to charm wise bucks. The smell and sound of a late breeding doe will attract the deer, and the visual of a decoy will seal the deal.

While a decoy attracts deer in the late season, it also distracts them when they get close. This helps when there is little cover around. It gives you the opportunity to make a shot without being busted in the act. Success can be hard to come by in the late season and if you make a mistake, you probably won't get a second chance. A deer decoy puts the odds in your favor.

If you still have a tag that needs filling in December and January, go on the offense and pack a decoy – or even a few – into the woods with you. During the late season, you will take any advantage you can get, and a decoy, with its attracting and distracting powers, offers you several.

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HUNTING & CONSERVATION NEWS

A Bull Elk's Bugle in Favor of Conservation

Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation

Ray Creek Conservation Project
(Photo courtesy Stephanie Parker)



An elk bugle call echoed across the foothills of the Big Belt Mountains on a damp autumn day, in between the passing of two rain storms, northeast of Townsend in west-central Montana. It came from the calling tube of Mike Mueller, senior lands program manager for the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation. There was no response, no confirmation...at least not immediately.

Mueller was part of a small but enthusiastic group of about 30 people who gathered in mid-October 2014 to celebrate a land acquisition project, brokered by RMEF that transferred nearly 1,000 acres of prime elk country from private to public ownership.

"We're truly blessed today. This is a big deal and you know we need to pause and take time because we worked so hard for this," said Mueller, as reported in the Independent Record.

It would not have happened if four sisters decided to sell their land—the former Neild family ranch—to private interests. Instead they teamed up with the U.S. Forest Service, RMEF and other partners to sell the 988 acres and watch it be conveyed to the Helena National Forest. The transaction also improves public access for hunters, hikers, anglers and other outdoor lovers to more than 6,000 additional acres of public land.

"It's kind of a bittersweet day for us," Barbara O'Dore, one of two Neild sisters on hand, told the Independent Record. "We have a lot of memories up here; you know we used to trail cattle up here and come up on picnics and pick choke cherries. Now the good thing is we can still come. It is a beautiful piece of property."

In addition to being prime elk habitat, the property contains a segment of Ray Creek that covers more than two miles.

"It was a fantastic day of celebrating partnerships," said Jennifer Doherty, RMEF director of lands. "So many entities and people came together to make this project happen and it was evident that it was at the heart of what so many people value: public access for Montanans and habitat for elk and pure-strain westslope cutthroat trout."

The dedication ceremony continued with a sign unveiling, recognition, picture-taking and the sharing of many heartfelt feelings of gratitude. In the midst of it all, it finally came. Although barely imperceptible, several in the celebration party heard it. A bull elk chimed in with a distant bugle, seemingly in approval and appreciation of the successful conservation efforts directed at its homeland.

Below are the words of RMEF President and CEO David Allen, shared by Doherty at the dedication:

"This is what it's all about. This projects hits at the heart of the mission of the Rocky Mountain Elk foundation. It's an incredible project that permanently protects almost a thousand acres of prime elk habitat while also providing a new access point for sportsmen and women... AND making it happen alongside a great group of conservation partners who understand and appreciate its importance.

"RMEF is proud to have collaborated with the Neild Family, US Forest Service, Montana Fish and Wildlife Conservation Trust, Cinnabar, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and all of those who worked to secure federal Land and Water Conservation Funds.

"This project celebrates many winners. It's not only you and I and the people of Montana, but also elk, mule deer, moose, mountain goats, bighorn sheep, other critters and, of course, the pure-blood westslope cutthroat trout that live in Ray Creek.

"We express our sincere thanks to all who made this day possible. Again, we thank our partners, our volunteers and members, and each of you for your support of the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation."



Bureau of Land Management Photo

Montana Elk Habitat, Wolf Management, Research Bolstered by RMEF Grants

Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation

Grants totaling \$451,042 provided by the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation will fund more than three dozen habitat enhancement, research, hunting heritage and other conservation outreach projects across the state of Montana in 2014.

The grants will positively affect 12,198 acres in Beaverhead, Broadwater, Deer Lodge, Flathead, Glacier, Jefferson, Lewis and Clark, Lincoln, Madison, Meagher, Missoula, Pondera, Powder River, Ravalli, Rosebud, Sanders, Silver Bow, Sweet Grass and Toole Counties. There are also two projects of statewide interest and another of Western Montana interest.

"A series of prescribed burning, thinning and noxious weed projects will clear the way for new grasses and forbs that provide proper nutrition for elk and other wildlife in some of Montana's best elk habitat," said David Allen, RMEF president and CEO. "These grants also help pay for four research projects that monitor elk populations and deal with habitat as well as provide funds for wolf management and a land acquisition that improves public access."

RMEF's mission is to ensure the future of elk, other wildlife, their habitat and our hunting heritage. Since 1985, RMEF and its partners completed 821 different conservation and hunting heritage outreach projects in Montana with a combined value of more than \$140.4 million that opened or secured public access to 215,046 acres.

"Montana has more than 12,000 RMEF members spread across 20 different chapters. We thank them and our diligent and dedicated volunteers who raised the grant funding by hosting banquets, membership drives and other events," added Allen.

Allen also thanked volunteers and members across the nation for their dedication to conservation and elk country.

HUNTING & CONSERVATION NEWS

Mule Deer Foundation Hires New Regional Director for Western Montana

Mule Deer Foundation
The Mule Deer Foundation (MDF) has added a second regional director in Montana to accommodate the growth of Mule Deer Foundation chapters in the Big Sky State. With the state's mule deer population being affected by loss of habitat and predation, and hunters facing sportsmen's access issues, MDF has been fielding calls to start new chapters in Montana. Michael Kuiper of Great Falls started earlier this month as regional director in western Montana to provide more support to this part of the state.

"Having two RD's will benefit Montana so we can focus on the two distinct topographies in the state - the mountains and valleys of western Montana and the plains and badlands of eastern Montana," said Marshall Johnson, MDF's regional director for eastern Montana and North Dakota...

The Mule Deer Foundation has accomplished a lot in Montana in the past four years with 12 chapters now active in the state. MDF has been making a mark on habitat through funds raised at banquets, but MDF and its members want to do more. With the addition of Michael, MDF plans to start chapters in Dillon, Havre and Polson in the west and Lewistown, Glasgow and Sidney/Glendive in the east within the next six to eight months. Michael's territory will cover the western region of Montana from the Idaho state line to Livingston and up to the Canadian border...

If you have interest in helping the Mule Deer Foundation help the mule deer of Montana, contact Michael Kuiper at (406) 788-4616 for western Montana and/or Marshall Johnson at (406) 850-8785 for eastern Montana.

Report Outlines Efforts To Keep The Public Out Of Public Lands And Waters

Montana Wildlife Federation
Montanans are increasingly being kept out of their public lands by people gating public roads through private land, a new report titled "Roadblocked and Landlocked" has found.

The joint Montana Wildlife Federation and Public Land/Water Access Association report details the growing trend of gated public roads that has cost hunters, anglers and all outdoor recreationists access to tens of thousands of acres of their public national forests, grasslands and rivers.

"This report shows how ordinary Montanans have lost access to some of our most treasured public lands," said Skip Kowalski, President of the Montana Wildlife Federation. "Public access is essential to get to the places that Montanans love to hunt, fish, hike and pursue all kinds of outdoor recreation."

The report illustrates case studies of routes formerly open to the public that have been gated. These closures have forced everyday Montanans into expensive, lengthy court battles to gain what is rightfully theirs - the ability to use public roads that have long been open to everyone....

But one gate, as with the Tenderfoot Creek Road north of White Sulpher Springs, can block off huge swaths of public land behind them, said John Gibson, president of the Public Land/Water Access Association. With the Tenderfoot, the gated road cut off 8,200 acres of prime national forest land that offers excellent public hunting for elk and deer.

"For over two decades we've seen some people work to privatize our public lands by cutting off public access," Gibson said. "And once somebody controls the access, they control all the public resources, including the fish and wildlife on those lands."

PLWA has been at the forefront of working to maintain and restore public access throughout the state by going to court to ensure these roads remain open. The group has also been a staunch defender of Montana's stream access law, which gives the public the right to use public rivers and streams by staying within the high water mark.

...MWF along with PLWA will be working on several bills in the 2015 Legislature to address the problem and guarantee the public maintain access to its public lands.

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FUR LOADS

By Tim Titus
www.no-off-season.com



The coyote came through the sage at a steady lope. Pivoting the rifle and bipod in his direction, I let out a “Woof”. The coyote came to a stop and almost simultaneously dropped like the proverbial sack of potatoes.

Walking up to the well-furred predator, the result was what I had come to expect... one small entrance hole and no exit. The bullet had entered, totally fragmented and then stayed inside the animal. Perfect. No time would be wasted in the fur shed sewing this pelt and no discounts would be taken from the fur buyer trying to maximize his profits at my expense. The outcome was predictable but not easily obtained. It came at the expense of a long quest for a consistent fur load and resulted from extensive research and experimentation.

As the fur market rebounds with the perceived economic recovery, harvesting a good useable hide becomes more attractive. Fur markets cycle with the economy and the world fashion trends. They always have and always will. But, the desire to cleanly harvest predators with a minimum of pelt damage goes beyond simple economics. The thought of leaving a marketable hide in the field is just as foreign to some as leaving the backstrap of their deer...It just seems right to use the resource. Others simply take pride in putting up a nice clean pelt. And, when it comes right down to it, most fur takers would rather hunt than sew; otherwise they would spend their time in front of the fire knitting mittens instead of hunting predators.

The first coyote I ever called was taken at 10 yards with a Hornady 110 grain Spire Point handload from my old Remington M725 .30-06. The tip of that coyote’s tail graced the zipper pull on my favorite gun case for decades and, after the dust settled, the tip of its tail was about all that was left! That began my search for the perfect fur load. Like most, my testing started with a full metal jacketed bullet. But, like many, the FMJ’s left me wanting— wanting more consistent performance and wanting fewer lost coyotes. Coyotes are tough animals that need and deserve a quick decisive kill whether you respect the animal or not.

After the FMJ phase, the next step on my journey came after reading Rick Jamison’s book *Calling Coyotes: And Other Predators*. Jamison hunted coyotes for a living in the hay-days of the coyote hide market. He prescribed the Speer 52 grain hollow point over H380 if I remember correctly. The load was travelling around 3800 fps when it exited the muzzle of his .22-250. Rick claimed the bullet would not exit a coyote on a straight-on frontal shot. I did kill one straight-on “drive-by” coyote with this load—a Texas heart shot that perfectly perforated the coyote’s tail bone and failed to exit.

However, this author's calling skills at that time must have been somewhat lacking compared to Jamison's because that was the only straight-on shot I ever took with that bullet. Shots at other angles left gaping holes so the search for the elusive perfect fur load continued.

The Factors

Predator hunters tend to talk about coyotes as if they are all created equal. They are not. Predators vary tremendously in a number of characteristics that impact (pun intended) the terminal performance of bullets. Body size varies not only by sex and age but also by longitude. Bergman's Rule states that a species' size in cooler climates tend to be larger than specimens in warmer climates. Coyotes in the Arizona desert weigh significantly less on average than coyotes from the Alberta plains. Therefore, all things being otherwise equal (and they rarely are) a big, northern coyote can absorb more bullet without an exit and will also take more energy to kill cleanly than a smaller desert coyote from the Southwest.



Varmint performance gives clues to pelt performance. A 300 yard rockchuck, a .204 35 gr Berger- no exit.

The second factor affecting terminal performance on predators is the thickness of the pelage. Again, hair coat varies not only by climate but by time of year. Testing a marginal load on early fall coyotes may lead to disappointment once the pelts prime in the middle of winter. Fat layers may also change the expected performance of fur loads. And, lastly, the characteristics of the species also affects bullet performance. The hair coat and hide of the bobcat is not as tough as that of coyotes for instance.

Fox are a rarity in this area. And, all bets are off on these small predators. A shotgun may be the only sure medicine for a nice fox pelt and a quick kill.

(continued on page 34)

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JUDITH BASIN BIRDS HOTBED FOR PHEASANTS

By H & F News Pro Staff



Jay - Chukar flying
 Photo courtesy Shoco Ranch

The season for upland birds in Montana runs through December and now that the deer and elk hunters are done for the year, it's time to go after pheasants, sharptails or Hungarian partridge.

Pheasants and grouse will be concentrated around primary food sources as snow and cold weather kick their metabolisms into high gear.

Birds can be reluctant to run or flush in cold weather, which means you can get closer or easier shots.

The Judith Basin has a fair amount of private lands enrolled in the Block Management Program, as well as State Lands and even some land that is managed primarily by Pheasants Forever - although hunted pretty hard, it can be productive at times.

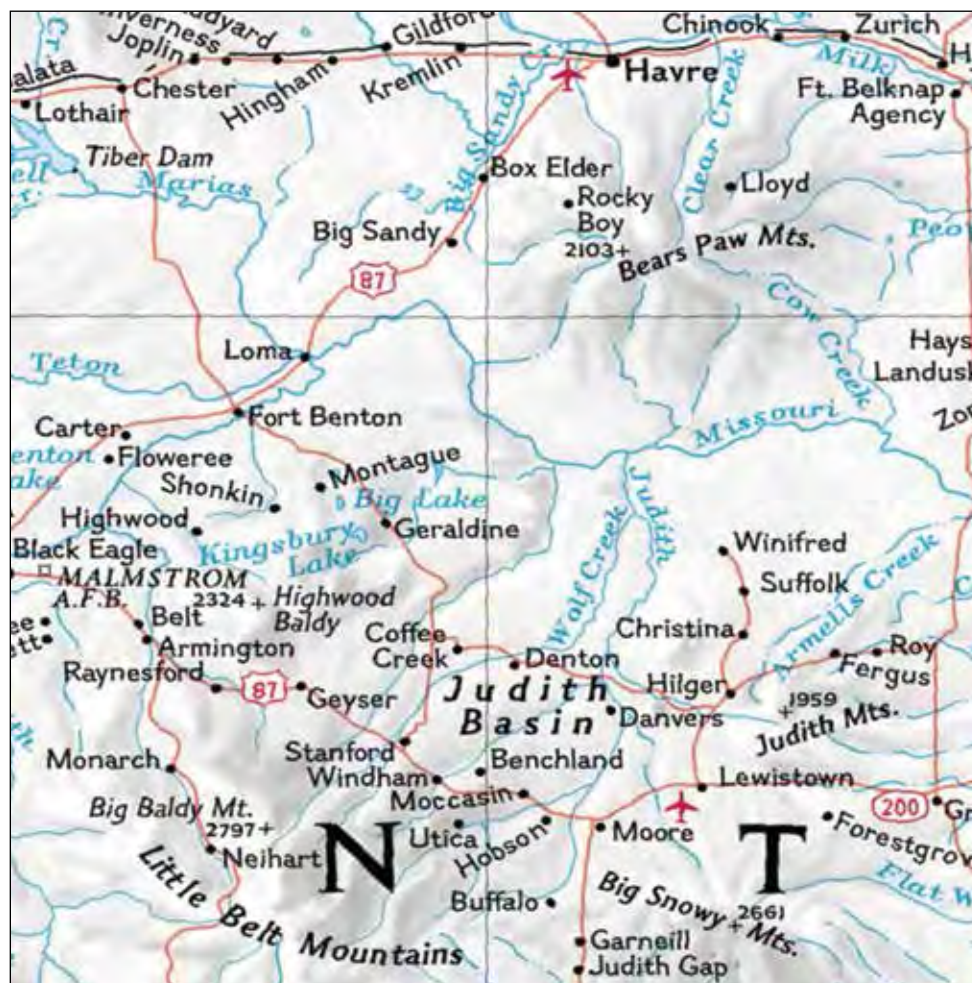
For the best success, hunt the morning after a snowstorm when birds will be out feeding and concentrated in the dense cover along the river bottoms.

By this time of year, huns are pretty wild and tough to kill. Sharptails are also tough to hunt, mainly because they are gathering in large numbers and can be hard to surprise. At times, they will fly off a long ways, but you can get them if they decide to perch in a tree nearby. They'll be concentrated around Russian Olive groves and any fruit bearing shrubs or trees. You will find them in open cut wheat fields as well.

Where to go:

Any open field or river bottom country you can get access to from Lewistown to Fort Benton or the Stanford/Denton area can be very good hunting now.

Map produced using National Geographic TOPO
 Courtesy Rocky Mountain Maps
www.rockymtnmaps.com





Late-Season Duck Hunting Strategies

Steve Hickoff, Yamaha Outdoors Tips

Has your decoy spread gone stale? Do ducks pass your blind but keep going? Try these tricks on late-season ducks that have seen everything.

We duck hunters fall into bad habits sometimes and get lazy: same spot, same spread, same calling and same results if we've been skunked the last few times out. Mix it up. Ignore your old locations and try some new ones.

Get permission where you've seen fresh birds in a new location that doesn't seem to be feeling any pressure. It might pay off as a one day flash hunt, or be the start of a new tradition. As always with gaining access, explain what you'll be doing there and who you'll be bringing into the spot, if anyone. And when you kill some ducks, offer some to the farmer or deed holder. They may politely decline but the gesture means plenty.

"Go big or go home." We duck hunters sometimes operate by this rule. Well, big water with huge decoy spreads sometimes puts birds on the supper table. When it doesn't, try opposing tactics. Hit small water with just a minimal number of decoys. Late in the season migrating ducks might trust just a handful of floaters on a little pond as opposed to hundreds on the nearby lake.

Are you a puddle duck hunter fond of greenheads? Has your spot gone stale? Hunt diver ducks then. Action is action, no matter your preferred species.

Your Yamaha ATV or Side-by-Side hasn't seen any ride time since you tagged your early-season deer. Maybe you should get it out again for late-season ducks. The beauty of a four-wheeler is you can transport plenty of gear – including decoys – a long distance in a safe and reliable way.

Are you pretty much a decoy and call kind of waterfowler? Try jump-shooting loafing birds at midday where available. Whether you bring a dog along or not, it's much like upland bird hunting and shooting.

Find one new location to duck hunt this season by simply studying maps. Remote ponds, if yet unfrozen, can provide refuge to pressured birds. This includes backcountry river systems, small streams and big water inlets.

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FUR LOADS (continued from page 31)

Virtually all fur load testing has been done on Oregon desert coyotes and bobcats. Adult males range from 28 to 35 pounds. Females run about four pounds less. Occasionally individuals will weigh somewhat more but usually not significantly. Most of our predator hunting takes place while furs are prime. Any load recommendations should be weighed with these parameters in mind. One size doesn't fit all when discussing fur loads.

Broad generalizations concerning terminal performance on fur may be well intended but they don't necessarily result in accurate conclusions. The local characteristics and species being hunted must also be factored.

The Options So, what are the options for fur loads? The shotgun is probably the best if ranges are short but stories of 70 yard shotgun coyotes may cause predator hunters to overestimate the capabilities of their weapon even with the latest heavy metal shot and the greatest choke tubes. Pattern your shotgun and keep your expectations reasonable. Skinning coyotes with pellets under their hides from earlier encounters with hunters says that some hunters are overreaching their shotgun's capabilities.

As a rifle shooter at heart, this article focuses primarily on rifle loads for fur. This is the realm that becomes fascinating to the student of terminal ballistics. The information here has largely been developed on live targets. Gelatin blocks and wet newspapers are not this author's gig. A student of terminal performance can also legitimately garner some bullet performance insight from use on other species but actual performance on furbearers needs to be done before a hunter settles on The Load.

Occasionally, posts appear on forums from well meaning individuals espousing the virtues of a given bullet or load based on the two coyotes they have taken with said bullet and load. A couple of coyotes can give an indication of a load's usefulness on fur but it is only that—an indication. A small sample of predator kills will not touch the variety of velocities, angles, shot placements, etc that will determine the consistent performance on fur. Only day in and day out use on many animals in many different circumstances will determine if the chosen fur load will perform in a repeatable way in your area on your animals.

Bullet Characteristics The primary consideration for bullets intended for fur is the bullet construction; specifically, how fragile they are. Although many use the term "explosive", no readily available bullets actually explode. They fragment.

Long range predator loads may be best served with a heavily constructed bullet that can be placed through the rib cage. The heavier, high ballistic coefficient bullets required for this game generally don't lend themselves to fragmentation without exit. The exception to this may be the Hornady A-max bullets which tend to be fairly fragile for their weight. For calling distances, let's say 250 yards and less, our objective is to match the construction of the bullet to the impact velocity so the bullet penetrates to the vitals then fragments without exiting. As a general rule, the faster the impact velocity, the tougher the bullet construction required.

Bullets of any given caliber, make and style tend to be less fragile as the weight increases. A 50 grain .224 V-max bullet will tend to fragment easier than a 60 grain .224 V-max for instance. So, a low velocity round shooting the 50 grain V-max bullet may perform similarly to a high velocity load shooting the 60 grain V-max.

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After using the Speer 52 grain HP in my .22-250, the quest for a fur load continued with various 52 and 53 grain match bullets. Results were very similar...a lot of fist size exits, especially on broadside shots. I took a short run with 40 grain Varmint Match bullets in my .22-250's and found that splashes (fragmentation on the surface without penetration) seemed to be the name of the game on short range shoulder shots. This resulted in large entrance wounds without penetration to the vitals so they were quickly abandoned.



Fur damage-
the last thing
you want
when a
bobcat
arrives.

At this point, I purchased my first rifle in the .204 Ruger cartridge. It was a lovely Cooper M21 Varminter. The objective was to call my own shots on rockchucks but not long after the purchase, reports of fur performance with 35 grain Berger bullets began to surface. Such a nice piece of walnut was nerve racking to carry in the field but when a bobcat might be encountered, the .204 got the nod. (Ever notice how many coyotes show up when you start targeting 'cats?) The 35 grain Berger in the .204 proved perfect for our desert coyotes. Bang-flop performance and almost no fur damage. I felt I had reached Fur Load Nirvana. This load has served well as the primary calling cartridge for the last few years. Eventually all the .22-250 rifles in the safe were replaced with .204's but that move would have been slowed or possibly abandoned if the quest for fur loads had gone more quickly.

A post on another forum by a well known and well traveled predator hunter, Byron South, suggested the Hornady 60 grain V-max in the .223 REM cartridge. My son was still shooting a .22-250 so we loaded a moderate 60 grain V-max load in his rifle and after years of large exits, we suddenly started seeing good fur performance in the .22-250. The sample of coyotes shot with this bullet has not been definitive but it was the first acceptable results we had seen. No splashes and no exits except one coyote hit high in the back. The indications were that this would be an excellent fur load in this cartridge. Had this bullet surfaced before the .204 craze hit, the .22-250 may have stayed the number one calling cartridge in the stable.

However, load development didn't end there either. Reading some reports of .243 performance with the 58 grain V-max, my son began trying some of these bullets in his .243Al long range rig. Finding a load that shot to a similar POI as his 105 grain A-max load allowed him to carry one rifle for calling and the occasional "drive-by" or hung up coyote. The performance of this bullet on fur has been encouraging.



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However, as was stated earlier in the article, terminal performance on other game can give some indication of relative performance on fur. This load will literally tear a jack rabbit in half at close range. It is devastating and similar to a 32 grain V-max from a .204 leading to the conclusion that it may splash given enough quartering-on shoulder shots at calling ranges. There is a box of 65 grain V-maxes on the loading bench that need some fur time. They may be a better choice at .243 Ackley Improved velocities.

And, so goes the quest....

General Observations

The .204 Ruger cartridge has received some bad press concerning coyotes running off after being solidly hit. It's this author's contention that much of this has been the result of using the light, 32 grain poly-tipped bullets in this round. Berger bullets hold together much better than the Hornady V-max and Sierra Blitz King bullets. This has again been confirmed on varmint species. In this small caliber, use of more stoutly constructed bullets or limiting your shots to broadside opportunities is critical. The more fragile bullets have killed and can kill coyotes but there are better tools for the job.

Similarly, the various .17 centerfires make excellent fur cartridges with good bullets like the 30 grain Kindler Golds in the .17 Remington or even the Hornady 25 grain HP in the .17 Fireball. But, coyotes deserve to be taken with bullets of adequate construction to allow consistent, clean kills with these small calibers. Remember, the hotter the cartridge, the tougher the bullet needs to be constructed. Seventeen and twenty caliber cartridges with extremely fragile bullets designed for use on varmints need to be limited to perfect shots when used on predators. Avoid larger bones and heavier muscle mass.

In the popular "varmint" calibers, a list of increasingly tougher bullet construction would look something like this (most fragile to toughest): Hornady V-max, Sierra BlitzKing, Hornady A-max, Nosler Ballistic Tip, Berger Varmint Match, the various match bullets from Berger and other major manufacturers, then bullets designed for big game such as the Remington CoreLokt on up to the Barnes TSX's. (continued on page 44)

Pheasant Release Applications Due January 15 MFWP

Landowners have until Jan. 15, 2015 to submit an application for 2015 pheasant releases through Montana's Upland Game Bird Enhancement Program.

Under Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks' pheasant release program, landowners who attempt to establish pheasant populations in suitable habitat can be reimbursed for raising and releasing ring-necked pheasants.

Landowners interested in raising and releasing pheasants have until Jan. 15, 2015 to submit an application. Landowners can apply annually for up to five consecutive years to establish pheasants.

Projects must comprise at least 100 contiguous acres of land and contain a combination of habitat components that include the types of cover and food upland game birds need to survive. Lands enrolled in the pheasant release program must allow free public access to hunt upland game birds during the season the releases take place.

Applications need to be received by FWP in Helena no later than Jan. 15, 2015. Pheasants will be scheduled for release in the late summer between Aug. 1 and Sept. 15.

Hunting preserves, lands that host a commercial hunting enterprise, and lands where hunting rights are leased or paid for are not eligible.

For more information, and an on-line application form, visit FWP's website at fwp.mt.gov—search "Upland Game Bird Enhancement Program," or contact Debbie Hohler at: 406-444-5674, or by e-mail: dhohler@mt.gov.

Illegal Walleye Introduction Discovered in Bynum Reservoir

MFWP

Fish, Wildlife and Parks fisheries biologists have discovered illegally introduced walleye in Bynum Reservoir along the Rocky Mountain Front.

The discovery was made in September when a FWP fisheries crew netted three walleye. The reservoir is a popular perch and rainbow trout fishery.

The walleye were aged at 6.5 and 7.5 years. No walleye had been sampled from Bynum since 2003, the last year they were stocked there.

When examined under a microscope using ultraviolet light, one fish showed it was marked at a state hatchery in 2008. The closest walleye population with marked fish stocked in 2008 is Lake Frances near Valier. FWP fisheries staff suspects someone illegally moved the fish from Lake Frances to Bynum in the past year.

Bynum had been a walleye-perch fishery and was stocked with walleye from the mid-1980s to 2003. Fluctuating water levels in Bynum resulted in inconsistent fisheries from the late 1990s through 2007. FWP even closed the reservoir twice to protect the fishery.

In 2008, Bynum began to fill, a resident perch population started to expand and anglers began to use the reservoir. By 2011, Bynum had 10,539 angler days. In 1997, at the peak of the walleye fishery, Bynum's reached 3,293 angler days.

State law makes it illegal to introduce or transplant fish in any Montana pond, lake, stream or river unless authorized by the Fish and Wildlife Commission. Penalties can include fines ranging from \$2,000 to \$10,000, loss of fishing, hunting, and trapping privileges, and liability for the costs to eliminate or mitigate the effects of the violation...

Angler groups from across Montana have come together to increase the reward to \$4,250 and Montana Trout Unlimited has pledged an additional \$10,000 for information leading to conviction for illegally introducing fish. FWP fisheries staff will conduct a follow-up investigation in the coming weeks to determine if more walleye are in Bynum.

Three Elk Poached On BMA North Of Whitehall MFWP 11/5/14

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks is investigating the illegal take of three elk on the Split Diamond Ranch north of Whitehall recently.

After receiving reports from a hunter who discovered the dead elk on Monday, game wardens investigated and confirmed two spikes and one cow elk were shot and left to waste within close proximity of each other.

The Split Diamond allows public hunting under FWP's Block Management Program. Numerous hunters were signed in to hunt the Block Management Area (BMA) over the weekend and wardens hope somebody may have seen something.

Warden Captain Sam Sheppard said, "This type of activity is selfish and resulted in a gross waste of game. It's not hunting. It's stealing from the people of Montana."

Anyone with information is asked to call (800) TIP-MONT. Callers may remain anonymous and may be eligible for a reward.



Moose Shot, Left to Waste North of Butte MFWP 10/31/14

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks received numerous reports of a dead moose off Lowland Road near Maney Lake in the Elk Park area north of Butte Wednesday.

FWP game wardens investigated and found a cow moose that had been shot in its chest and left to waste. The moose's calf was nearby and unharmed. This moose was later identified by an ear tag as a cow that had been moved from a location in Butte in 2010.

FWP is now looking to the public for help. Anyone with information related to the incident should call (800) TIP-MONT. Callers may remain anonymous and may be eligible for a reward.

There are no cow moose hunting permits in this area.

FWP Approves Proposed Fur Farm Near Roy MFWP

Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks has approved and issued a license to a commercial fur farm southwest of Roy.

"Based on the analysis in the environmental assessment, applicable laws, regulations and policies," says Gary Bertellotti, FWP Region 4 supervisor, "FWP has determined that this action will not have a significant effect on the human or physical environment."

The license will allow the Schultz Fur Farm to possess captive-raised bobcats, lawfully obtained from a licensed dealer for propagation and for sale of the pelts in the commercial fur industry.

FWP received more than 21,000 comments during the comment period, which ended Aug. 29.

A summary of the comments with FWP responses, as well as the entire decision notice, is on the FWP website, <http://fwp.mt.gov/> under the public notices link.

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can-am 

REGIONAL NEWS



Bighorns Captured, Taken To Research Facility In South Dakota

Eight bighorn sheep ewes exposed to a new strain of pneumonia were recently captured and moved from Heller Bar southwest of Lewiston to prevent spread of the disease to other nearby herds.



The herd had long suffered from pneumonia which has led to high lamb mortality rates. This summer, the ewe sub-group was found to be carrying a new strain of the disease that has killed both adults and lambs.

Wildlife managers from the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife and the Idaho Department of Fish and Game used a helicopter to remove all eight bighorn sheep prior to the onset of the bighorn mating period, which begins later this month. Rams travel beyond their normal home ranges while looking for mates, leaving open the possibility that a ram could mate with the ewes and then carry the new strain to other herds.

The captured ewes were transported to a research facility at South Dakota State University, where scientists are studying pneumonia, a disease that has serious impacts on free-ranging bighorn sheep.

The disease is typically initially introduced from domestic sheep or goats, but once infected bighorn sheep populations can carry it for years or even decades. Lambs are highly susceptible to pneumonia and 50 to 100 percent may die annually in infected populations.

The sheep have joined six Hells Canyon ewes already at the facility. In collaboration with the wildlife agencies of Oregon, Washington, Idaho and Nevada, the university is investigating how pneumonia persists in bighorn sheep populations and what can be done about it.

Cooperators also include the National Wildlife Health Center, Washington State University and Tri-state Chapters of the Wild Sheep Foundation.



Poacher To Pay \$30,240 In Fines

A tip to the Wyoming Game and Fish Department's Stop Poaching Hotline helped wildlife investigators apprehend a Chugwater man on multiple counts of taking big game animals without licenses.

Cheyenne Game Warden David Ellsworth said the tip lead investigators to a social media site where 47-year-old John Clark had posted photos of the animals he shot, including a photo of a buck antelope that he said was his "first antelope with a bow."

Further investigation revealed Clark, who lived in Rock River at the time, never purchased a hunting license for at least six big game animals that he killed between 2010 and 2013. Investigators obtained a search warrant for Clark's residence that led to the discovery of antlers and horns from the poached animals. They also discovered a pelt from a swift fox and talons from great horned owls and golden eagles.

During the investigation, Clark admitted to shooting a mule deer buck each year from 2010 to 2013, all without a license. When presented with the social media photograph of his "first antelope with a bow," he admitted that he had also shot that buck without a license in 2012. He then confessed to taking an additional buck antelope in 2010 and another in 2012.

Clark was charged with four counts of taking mule deer without a license; two counts of taking antelope without a license; illegal possession of elk meat; and two counts of illegal possession of mule deer meat. He was also issued warnings for illegal possession of raptor parts, and for theft/removal of a Game and Fish Department "road closed" sign. The Game and Fish Department did not take action on charges of trapping without a license, illegal take of a swift fox, or an over limit of trout that was also discovered during the investigation...

REGIONAL NEWS



Social Media Users Respond To Poaching Incidents

Several recent poaching cases are catching the attention of Facebook users who follow the Citizens Against Poaching page; a trophy mule deer shot before rifle season in Caribou County, two five-point bull elk shot out of season in Owyhee County, five mule deer with backstraps removed; left to waste in Homedale. The list goes on.

Some of these cases are stirring a great deal of emotion in wildlife lovers who are angry about these crimes. While social media allows Citizens Against Poaching to expose these cases more effectively, this is not necessarily a sign of an increase in poaching.

"With millions of acres of habitat here in Idaho, along with abundant wildlife, people who choose to steal fish and wildlife from the people of Idaho have plenty of opportunity," said Assistant Chief of Enforcement Chris Wright "Poaching has been a problem here from the day our agency was created 75 years ago. In the 21st century we hope tools like social media might actually help reduce poaching incidents."

Citizens Against Poaching offers cash rewards to callers who provide information leading to the citation of suspected poachers. Callers may collect a reward while remaining anonymous.

"Many true sportsmen would help us solve cases regardless of the reward," said Wright, "But it is a good added incentive for some people."

Social media is proving to be a highly effective way to spread the word about these crimes. The Facebook post showing those five mule deer left to waste in Homedale was shared 582 times. As a result, it has reached more than 32,600 Facebook users.

"This is one of several Facebook posts receiving a great deal of attention on the CAP Facebook page," said Public Information Specialist Steve Liebenthal. "With so much exposure, we are hopeful that one of those 32,000 people might have that one piece of information that will help us crack this case."...



WGFD Evaluating CWD Vaccine

A multi-year study to evaluate the effectiveness of a vaccine against chronic wasting disease is continuing at the Wyoming Game and Fish Department's Thorne/Williams Wildlife Research facility west of Wheatland. Chronic wasting disease is a fatal neurological disease affecting elk, deer, and moose, but is not thought to affect humans.

The study, which began in February 2013, involves 40 elk—20 that have been vaccinated and 20 non-vaccinated elk serving as a control group. Previous research has shown elk naturally contract chronic wasting disease at the facility.

"This study will be informative and valuable as we try to find out if there is a way to vaccinate against CWD. But, we do not know if this vaccine will work. Even if we find differences in infection rates, an effective, usable chronic wasting disease vaccine in free-ranging elk still has a long ways to go," Dr. Mary Wood, Wyoming Game and Fish wildlife veterinarian said.

Dr. Wood and other researchers are taking biopsies from both groups of elk and results from each group will be compared to determine if the vaccine is preventing infection. Obtaining CWD samples from live animals can help researchers determine if the animal has been infected before it develops the clinical disease. The biopsies of the vaccinated elk and those of the control group will be compared to see if there's any difference in early infection rates....

The study is expected to last about seven years after which it is hoped that it can be determined if the vaccine is giving the elk some protection against the disease...

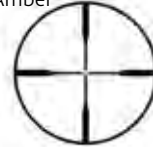
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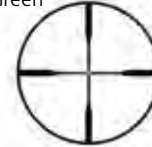
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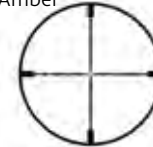
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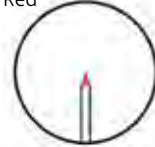
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WINTER TURKEY HUNTING

By Steve Hickoff Yamaha Outdoors Tips

You heard right: winter turkey hunting.

Nope, you can't hunt winter wild turkeys everywhere. Some states—such as Virginia, Kentucky Wisconsin, Florida and Montana to name a handful—offer extended and special seasons though. Check yours to see if one is available.

Sure enough, winter wild turkeys have seen some hunting pressure. A cold-weather flock holds a bunch of wary eyes. Nearly duped by our calling early on, or spooked in error, they've survived. This challenge is part of the fun.

Warm winter thaws after...might generate more intense gobbling from male birds. On the other hand, female turkeys are relying on a changing increase of daylight to indicate the approach of milder days, and to bring on the true breeding phase.

Find the food and you locate the primary destination of a winter turkey's daytime activity. Preferred flock roosts naturally hold their fly-up, nighttime, and fly-down attention.

Family flocks composed of either-sex birds of the year (born that previous spring or summer), and their brood hen(s), are highly visible in autumn; a transition takes place toward the year's end. There's a window of time when fall jakes (juvenile gobblers) leave that flock.

Why? Male turkeys of the year will sometimes cause pecking-order unrest in the once stable group, and move off in bands of fall jakes, leaving the young hens of the year and their brood hen(s) in a group.

These jake gangs are fun to hunt. They kee-kee-run and often throw a gobble on the end. They frequently make a big racket on the morning roost, from squawky gobbler yelps to that "gobble in progress."

While the remaining all-hen flocks are perfectly legal to hunt in many fall/winter turkey states (always check current regulations), you can choose now to either target the jake groups or that remaining family flock. You can also focus on gobbler gangs composed of "super jakes" (1-1/2 yr. old males), and pure longbeards (2+ yrs. of age).

This window of flock-variation opportunity might shift from day to day. There comes that time too, in winter, when all turkeys in a particular area regroup. Males might display together, off to the side, while hens show no interest. In terms of deer hunting, one might make a "pre-rut" analogy here. That big group of birds might form in an area due to limited food sources as well.

Get lucky? Every turkey hunter should open the crop of a killed bird to reveal what it has been eating. This is information for the current season (tags providing), and for future reference.

Seasons come and go. Your Yamaha ATV or Side-by-Side can put you into areas where turkeys haven't felt the pressure of previous months. Get out there and enjoy the outdoors.

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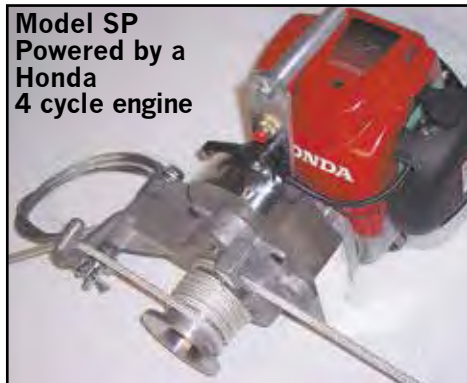
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TOP 5 GUNSMITH TOOLS

By Thomas Conroy ammoland.com

Good gunsmiths are part artist, part mechanic, with some woodworker, engineer, chemist and stage magician thrown in the mix.

Truly great gunsmiths produce ballistic masterworks that end up on display in places like the NRA National Firearms Museum. No matter what skill level they might have, all gunsmiths will find themselves facing some similar tasks and challenges while working on guns.

If you aren't a gunsmith, and just want to be able to do minor work or modifications to your guns, you'll still need some gunsmith tools.

And when you're looking for gunsmith tools and supplies, there just isn't any place that can match Brownells. They've been supplying gunsmiths with high-quality equipment since 1939. And while Brownells has really expanded into all sorts of other areas like ammo, reloading, archery and emergency and survival gear, they're still the go-to place for gunsmith tools.

So what are some of the specialized tools required to effectively work on guns?

I've compiled a list of what I believe are the Top 5, must-have tools. I know, I know, only 5? I had to make some serious cuts to get it pared down. For example, while I don't have any files or India stones (goo.gl/o62XV5) on the list, they are absolutely vital for working on guns. Same goes for dial calipers (goo.gl/ILDZhv). They are pretty much required for doing any sort of serious work on guns.

In making this list, I tried to focus on the kind of basic, foundational tools that every single gunsmith will have, and that non-gunsmiths should also have, if they plan on doing anything as simple as putting a new trigger in their AR-15, or maybe adding a different stock to their Remington 870.

But here are my Top 5 tools gunsmiths need for working on all sorts of guns.

5. A Vise. Before you can actually work on a gun, you must be able to hold it still. Because most of us are not born with a third hand, the best way to hold a gun still is with some sort of a vise. You can use a bench vise, like the Brownells Multi Vise (goo.gl/8itbj0). This model lets you position the vise body in different ways to help you do all sorts of different jobs.

For guns that accept detachable magazines, you can get specially-made blocks (goo.gl/dwMcbn) that snap into the mag well, and fit down into the vise, so you can secure the firearm without any part of it touching the vise itself.

You can also upgrade just about any vise by using non-marring jaws (goo.gl/HNt8VB) that stay put with magnets. That way you won't scratch that pretty bluing job, or mess up that gorgeous stick of black walnut. That's one of the complicating factors when it comes to gunsmith tools. They often have to be specially designed so they let you apply force to a gun without damaging the finish or the stock. Gunsmithing often takes a little

more finesse than clamping down a lawn mower blade so you can sharpen it with a big honkin' file or a bench grinder.

4. Bench Block. Like a vise, a bench block is a way to help hold a gun steady while you drive a pin either into or out of it. Bench blocks come in different sizes (goo.gl/sg0vsr), have holes in them that let pins drop free and clear, and are sometimes contoured to fit specific models of guns. Some of the best bench blocks are made out of really dense polymer that protects the finish of gun while you drive pins, but is solid enough to help you keep the gun in place while you work.



Brownells Multi-Vise:
<http://goo.gl/8itbj0>

Again, the goal is to do the required work without inflicting any damage on the gun.

It's sort of like the gunsmith version of the Hippocratic Oath. First, do no harm.

Brownells Extra-Large
GunSmith Bench Blocks:
<http://goo.gl/sg0vsr>



3. Nylon/Brass Hammer Sometimes, you do need to smack pins and parts to get them to go into place. But just like with a vise and the bench blocks, the trick is to do so without scratching, chipping, or otherwise dinging up the finish. One of the best tools for this delicate balancing act of just enough gentle force is the Nylon/Brass Hammer (goo.gl/WccuZ2). You can use the brass end to put solid hits onto really stubborn pins.

The nylon end is for those more delicate jobs, where one over-zealous tap can cost you a ruined finish.

Brownells 1" Nylon and Brass
Hammer: <http://goo.gl/WccuZ2>



Either way, you'll find such a hammer on just about every gunsmith's bench.

2. Pin Punch. Of course, you'll also need a pin punch to move those pins. One of the best sources of pin punches is Starrett (goo.gl/98uLY).

These are way more than just boring hunks of metal with different diameter heads. Starrett punches are finely made, with knurled center sections for precise control, and clear markings so you know exactly what size you're handling. You can buy them separately, or just get the set, which might make the most sense, considering how many different pin sizes you'll encounter.



Starrett - #565 Pin Punch Set

1. Gunsmith Screwdrivers. I've made this mistake myself a few times – using regular hardware store screwdrivers on the screws in my guns. Of course, I've boogered a few firearm screws in my time. And nothing screams out "Amateur!" quite like a scratched-up, marred screw head on an otherwise finely-finished gun.

Gunsmith screwdrivers are not like hardware store screwdrivers. The heads are specially beveled and tapered to perfectly fit into the screw heads and support them, so the edges of the slot aren't damaged, and you don't scratch off the finish, and otherwise just make a mess of them.

Brownells Magna-Tip & Super
Set Screwdriver Handles:



You can get these special gunsmith's screwdrivers either with fixed-blade (goo.gl/vhOua4) designs, or the "Magna-Tip" (goo.gl/kWYy15X) that has a hollow, magnetic end that lets you swap out various steel bits. You'll be getting a bunch of them, and you might even want to just break down and get a lot of them (goo.gl/sIDHqh) at once.

Even if you're not a gunsmith, and don't plan on becoming one, if you own more than just a couple of guns, you really ought to get yourself some specialized gunsmith screwdrivers.

Trust me on this one, okay? Don't learn the hard way. It'll save you some tears and cursing in the long run.

The Tools For The Job While gunsmiths are sort of mechanics for firearms, the tools they use are not exactly the same type you'd see a dedicated grease monkey using to loosen bolts under the hood of a pickup truck. Most people don't care what the bolts that hold their car's battery bracket in place look like. Lots of people do care what the screw head that holds the forearm on Grandpa's fine Italian over-under looks like.

Investing in some high-quality, purpose-built tools is one way to make sure you lay a solid foundation upon which to build your house of gunsmithing skills. And for us non-gunsmiths, getting a few of these tools will make minor repairs and adjustments easier to accomplish and just downright more fun to do.



Going Solo For Canada Geese

By H & F News Pro Staff

Goose hunting with friends and family is a lot of fun, but sometimes the most glorifying honker hunts happen alone. Here's how to find success in the field when you're the only one there.

- Motion is the key to any goose hunt. Wave a black flag or use a motion decoy to get the attention of passing geese from afar, or the corners when they're circling for another look.
- Full-body decoys are heavy and take a lot to set on your own, time you don't have before first light. Instead, use lighter shells and silhouettes that deploy quickly, take up minimal space, and are effective on pressured birds.
- Geese become spooky after surviving the first or second spread. Switch things up a bit by moving 90 degrees - being mindful to keep the sun out of your face, and catching birds from the side.
- A lone layout blind is easy to bring and blends in way better than a row of humps, but if driving to the X isn't in the cards, bring a small roll of burlap. This takes up virtually no space, and you can't get much lower of a profile than laying flat on the ground.
- Getting the same party feel of multiple callers takes practice as a solo act. Vary your pitch by opening and closing your off hand to sound like more than one goose. Better yet, get the tricky hiccup down by alternating a moan-cluck sequence that increases speed as the geese approach.

Hunting alone isn't easy, but the taste of success is sweet, plus it's better than not going hunting at all!

GEAR USED:

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- Layout blind
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- HEVI-Shot shells - HEVI-Metal

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FUR LOADS

(continued from page 35)



The objective becomes matching the bullet construction to the impact velocity. Splashes indicate the need for a tougher bullet (either a heavier bullet of the same style or another bullet of stronger construction) or a lower velocity. Exits indicate the need for more fragile bullets or higher velocity (within safe limits, of course) or both. So, let's say your trusty .22-250 starts to give indications of splashing with your 55 grain V-max load. The next logical step is to either switch to the 60 grain V-max or possibly the 55 grain Nosler Ballistic Tip. Again, adjust bullet construction to the results you see in the field.

Hitting a balance between not exiting on broadside shots and not splashing on shoulder shots is the key. When your fur load can do that the bulk of the time, you are on the right track.

Limitations

Some circumstances negate proper fur performance. Raking shots, whether to the side of the animal, high or low, will likely result in Johnson & Johnson's stock going up. (Dental floss is a popular hide sewing thread.) Increasing ranges and the resultant lower impact velocities may cause more exits because there is not enough remaining energy to cause the bullet to fragment. Hitting grass or weeds prior to contact with the animal may cause premature expansion. And, occasionally, bad luck just happens as was the case one morning calling coyotes.

A few minutes into a stand I had a large male coyote running straight at me. I was shooting my .22-250 and I thought to myself that this was the perfect shot for this load. As I touched the trigger, I hit the coyote center mass but instead of the perfect end-on performance I expected, the shot exited downward and just opened the coyote up. As I approached the big coyote, I realized he had a whole jack rabbit in his stomach. Two things jumped out at me. First, this coyote was not hungry. He was coming to the prey distress sounds in a territorial defense mode. Secondly, the full stomach of this coyote had totally changed the expected performance of the bullet. Somehow, either by deflection or by the sheer mass of the full belly, it had caused the bullet to exit the abdomen in a big way. If your perfect fur load has never let you down, just keep shooting—it will eventually.

Conclusion

Terminal bullet performance on fur is part art and part science. The tendencies of bullet construction as it relates to velocity and fragmentation of the bullet can help the fur taker to maximize the performance of his rifle on predators once an understanding of the principles is reached. Only through ongoing use on an increasing number of animals under your conditions can you draw meaningful conclusions as to quick kills and minimal pelt damage. So, leave the computer, load some ammo and do some field testing. After all, the in-field research is the most enjoyable part of this quest and knitting mittens isn't all it's cracked up to be anyway!

Good luck and good hunting. God bless. Tim

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