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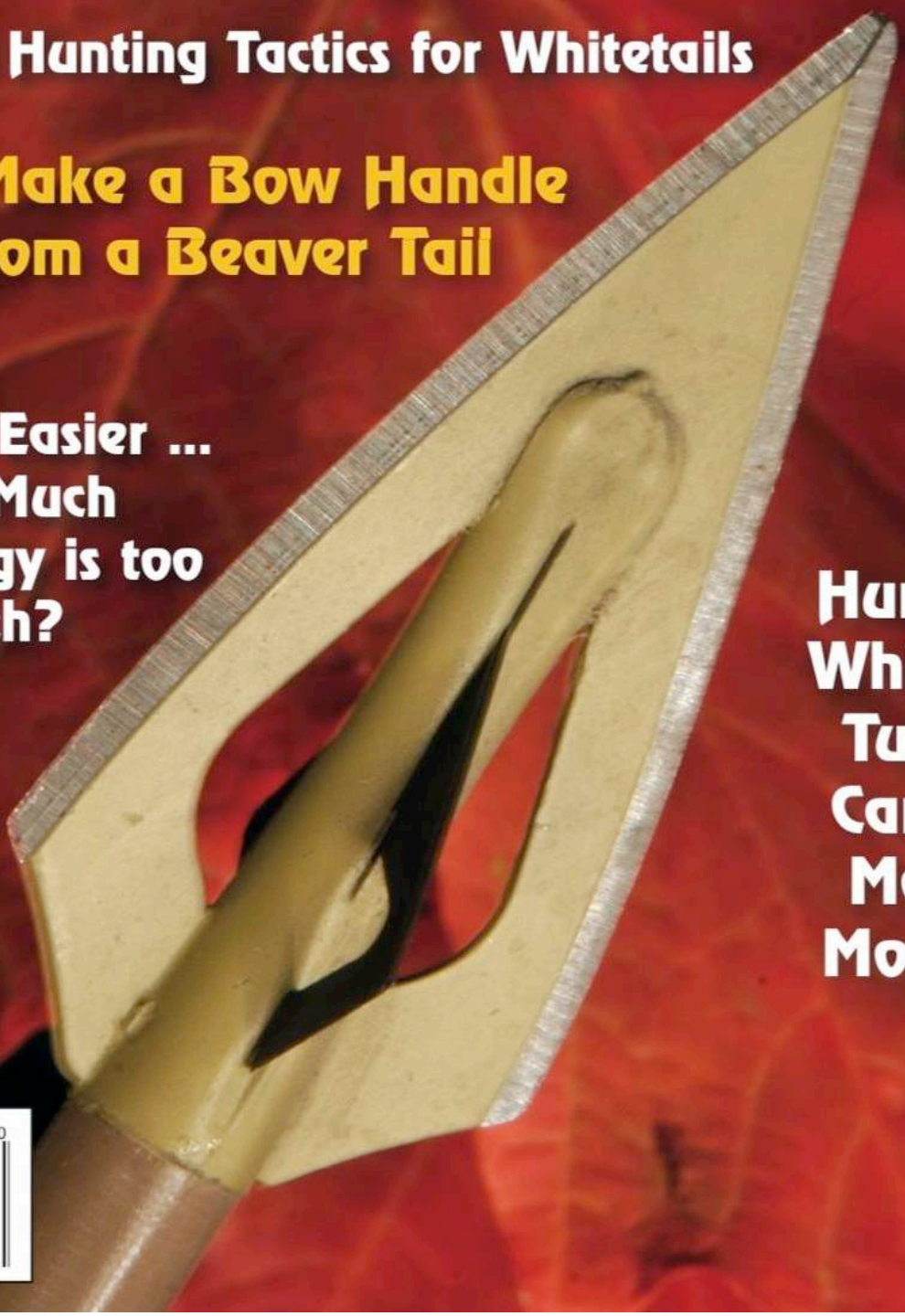

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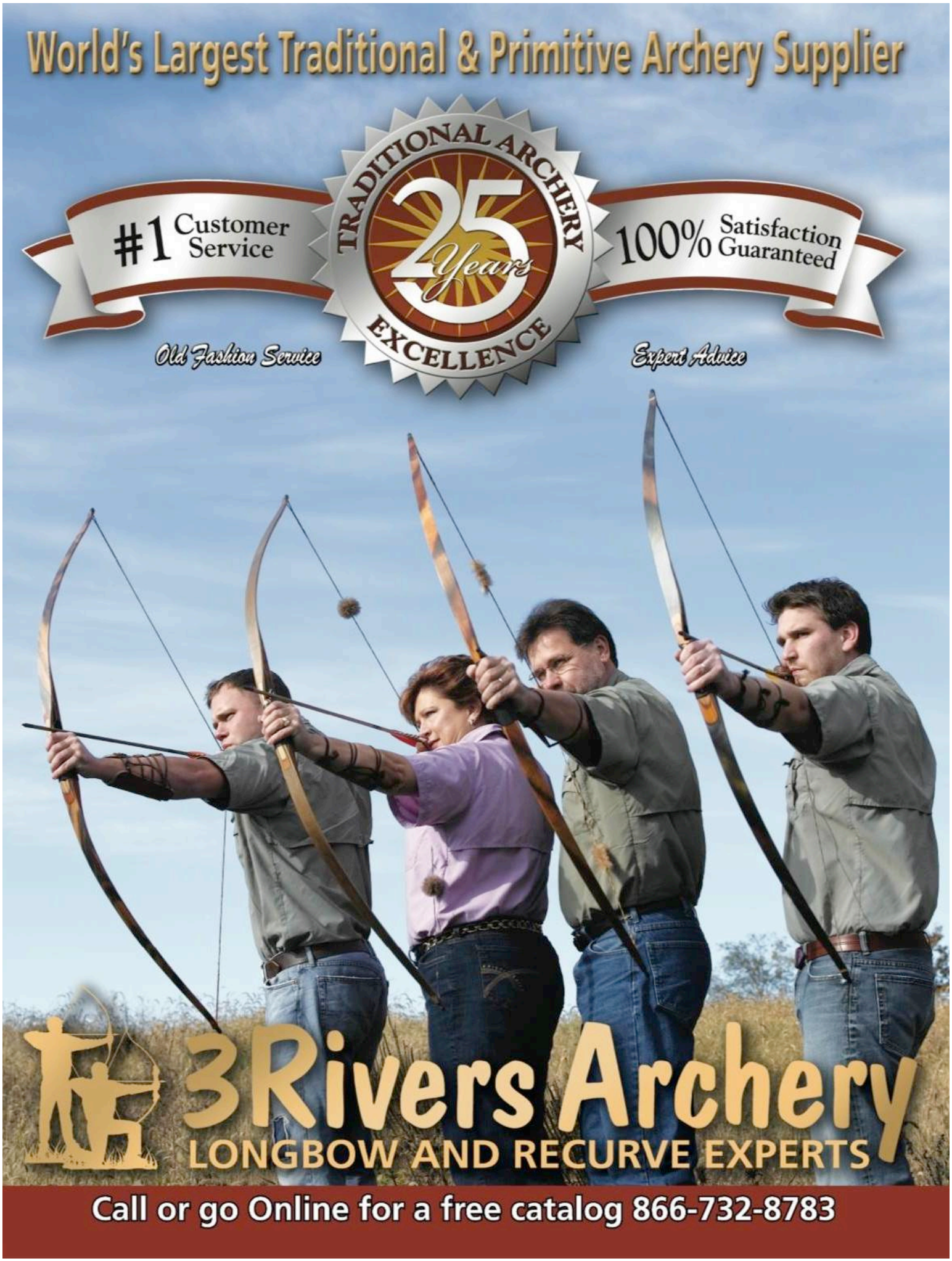
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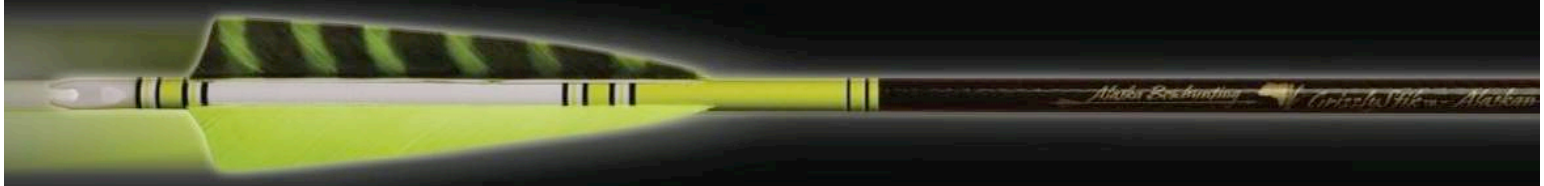

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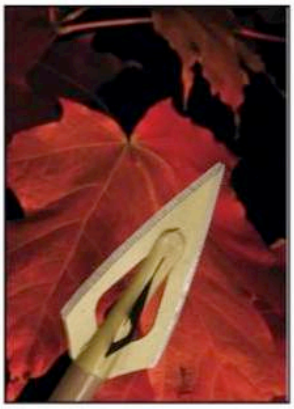
A Look Inside

Vol. 21, No. 5 Oct/Nov 2010



Features

15 Hunter by Nature, Archer By Instinct .....Matt Green
19 Longbow Rehab .....E. Donnall Thomas Jr.
27 Move to the Game .....Marv Clyncke
32 Wind Tunnel Turkey .....Jason R. Wesbrock
37 From Jeers to Cheers .....Robert Lindberg
46 Avoiding Easier .....G. Fred Asbell
53 The Life of Riley .....Mark Baker
79 Measuring Success .....Anthony Triolo
82 A Stick with Many Branches .....George Stamps
84 Novels in Nature .....Clay Hayes
88 50th Reunion .....Cliff Dale
91 The Between Time .....Nathaniel Paull

Profile

72 Aldo Leopold:

Pioneer Archer and Bowhunter .....Dave Sigurslid

Regular Departments

6 Editor's Note .....T.J. Conrads
9 Letters
41 The Ground Game .....Bob Steiner
50 Traditional Bow Review .....R. Blacky Schwarz
56 Primitive Bowhunter™ .....Krista Holbrook
60 Traditional Archives .....Duncan Pledger
63 Traditional Clubs
65 Traditional Wisdom .....Brian Sorrells
67 On The Market
70 Traditional Harvests
93 Classifieds
94 Book Review
96 Tips From the Old Timer .....Dennis Kamstra
98 Campfire Philosopher .....David Petersen

On the cover — The ubiquitous Bear Razorhead, one of the most popular broadheads ever manufactured.

Photo by Craig Caugh

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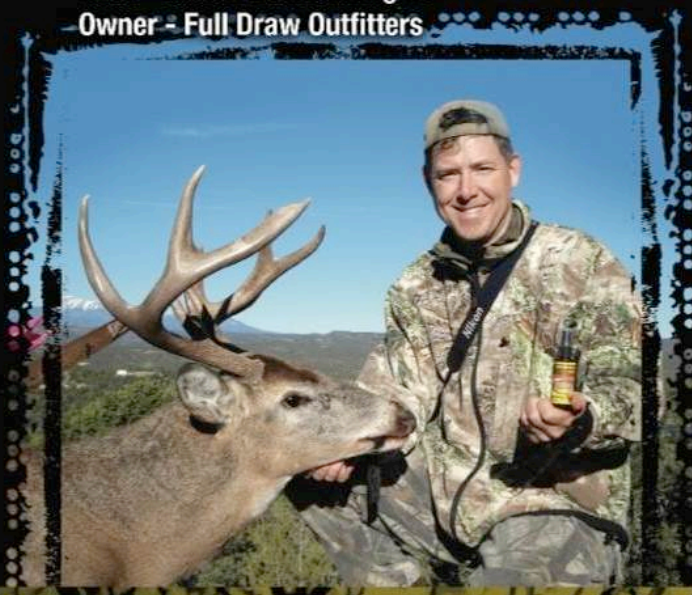

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Editor's Note

Every sportsman knows, or should know, what the Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Act, better known as the Pittman-Robertson Act of 1939, does for wildlife management in this country. This law allows for an 11% excise tax on all sporting firearms, ammunition, and fishing tackle, a 10% excise tax on pistols and revolvers, and an 11% excise tax on all bows and arrows, as well as on their parts and accessories. These funds are mandated for wildlife restoration, hunter and bowhunter education, the building of sporting facilities such as public gun ranges, and safety programs. For 2009, around $700 million was distributed to the states.

But how much of this went to projects required by law?

Jim Beers, a 32-year veteran and retired Chief of Operations of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Refuge System, claims that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) has misused (embezzled is his word) between $60- to $70-million from Pittman-Robertson monies to fund numerous unauthorized projects, such as funding wildlife land for building a state prison, funding park improvements, purchasing USFWS vehicles, and creating a slush fund to provide bonuses to Director Jamie Rappaport Clark as well as many other employees.

In addition, Beers claims the USFWS illegally used Pittman-Robertson funds to introduce wolves into the Northern U.S. Rockies, as well as building a new Regional USFWS Office in California, both of which funding were denied by Congress.

So what happened when Beers went public with these allegations? He was forced to retire and threatened that he would lose his benefits if he continued to investigate this misuse of taxpayer funds. In fact, he was offered a payoff to keep quiet for three years. Now, he is going public with what he, and others working for the USFWS, have uncovered.

The unfortunate thing here is that there are thousands of honest, hard-working employees of the USFWS who are doing fantastic work with your tax funds, and these egregious claims of misuses of taxpayer funds may have damaging affects on them.

Is it true that the USFWS has used sportsmens' funds for questionable, unauthorized, and quite possibly illegal, activities? This story is still unfolding, and you can find out more on these allegations at the following sites: www.allamericanpatriot.com/category/news-stories/featured-stories; www.blogster.com/jimbeers; as well as www.lobowatch.com.

T.J. Conrads—Editor

Corrections & Amplifications

The credit for the cover photograph of the Aug/Sep 2010 issue should have read Gary V. Logsdon. We apologize for this error.

In the last paragraph of Peter Bull's article in the August/September issue, we incorrectly reported that the author shot his moose in Labrador. The situation is confusing because Labrador and Newfoundland are part of the same province. Mr. Bull actually shot his animal in Newfoundland.

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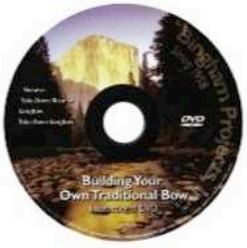

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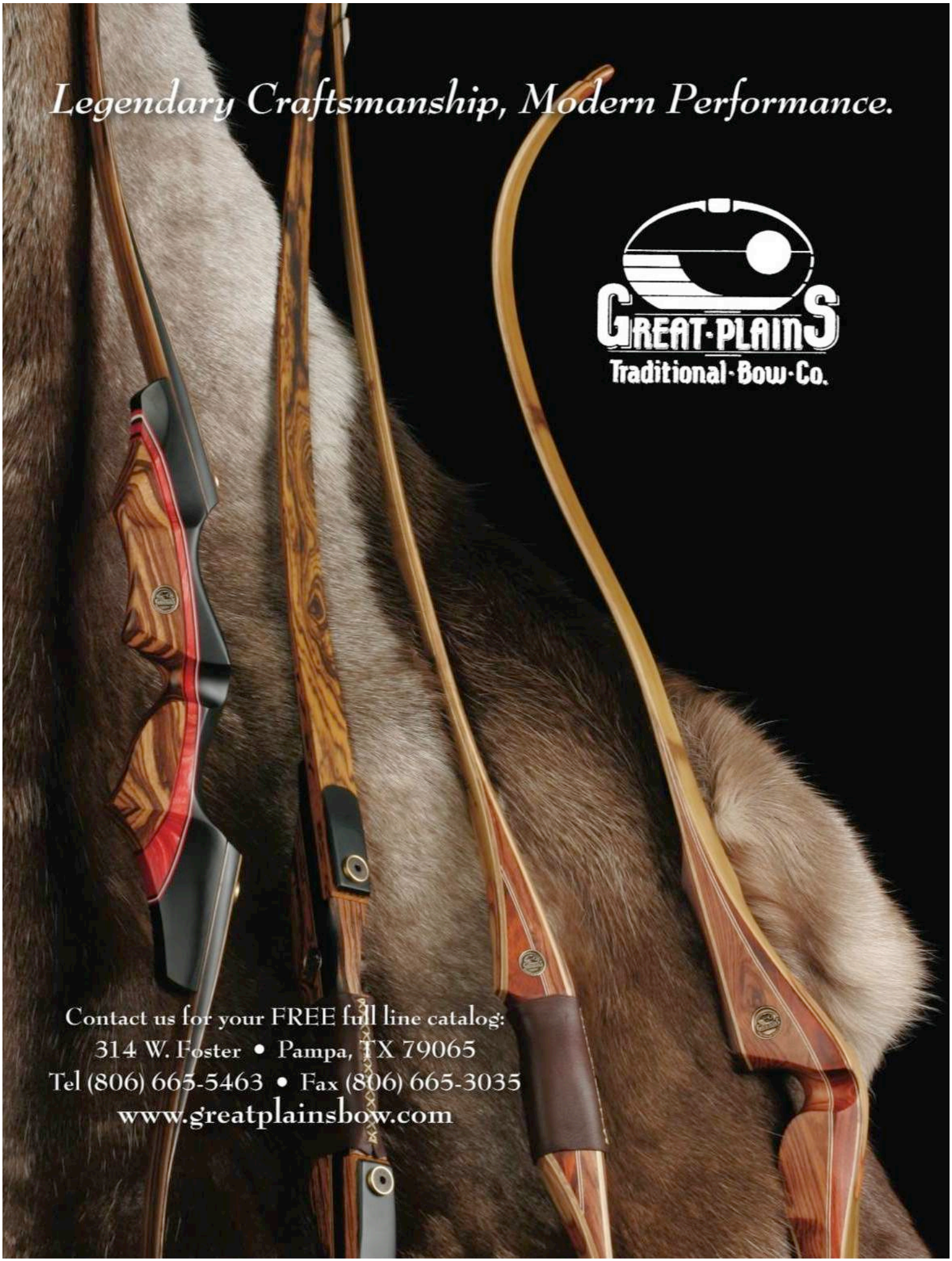
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Letters

Dear **TBM**,

I have been subscribing to this fine magazine for quite a while now and just sent in my three-year renewal. As I was drawing up my sketch work plans for a new backyard shooting platform, the latest issue arrived right on time. I will say that I have never received a bad issue, but this is by far the finest ever. My wife has also read it cover to cover. It would take too long to spell out every article I have read and reread so let me just offer all of you a great big "Atta Boy!" and keep up the good work. Now I can get back to work on that platform.

I rarely have exception with Dennis Kamstra's tips, but one paragraph that struck me was thoughts about the amount of food (or lack thereof) one should carry; it was a little over the top. The book Dennis refers to is *The Complete Walker*, by Colin Fletcher & Chip Rawlins — I own the fourth edition. This book is for a recreational hiker, not a backcountry hunter. Many times backcountry hunters try to take the "minimum" necessary to get by for four to ten days. Many try to lighten up as if they're hiking an easy trail.

Well, food is the next to last thing one should reduce, with water being the first! Your body needs a minimum number of calories per day. If one hunts from, and returns to a vehicle in gentle terrain (many parts of Africa), yes, then one may not need any food at all. But this is a reckless practice if one becomes lost and stays out one or more nights. I typically carry 2.2#/day of high caloric food (1 oz./100 calories minimum). I frequently lose 10# over ten days of climbing and descending thousands of feet of vertical terrain. If you skimp on calories this can rob protein from muscle and cause other health issues. A close friend just returned from Special Forces try-outs. On return, he and many others were sick and lost a minimum of ten pounds. To reduce your pack's base weight, reduce the amount of JUNK you carry (i.e., this gadget or that gadget). Reduce gear-weight first, bulk secondly, and don't forget to drink water.

Free yourself of the junk, but don't skimp on the food if you hunt in rugged, or mountainous terrain.

Thanks for such a great publication.

Karl J. Findling
Via the Internet

Dear Jillian,

I would like to express my appreciation for your time, the back issues of **Traditional Bowhunter** and the gift. These back and current issues kept me occupied and made my days more enjoyable while having to take chemo and radiation treatments. Reading and often rereading your magazine really gave me something to look forward to. Due to the loss of strength and body mass I was unable to pull my recurve to anchor so instead of letting the Black Widow bow collect dust I sent it back to the manufacturer and had a set

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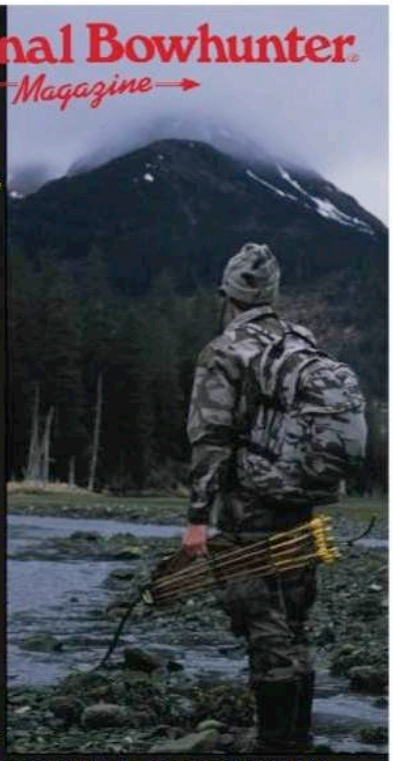

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of lighter limbs made for it. Now I practice and exercise daily. My daily practice session has become a ritual in efforts to overcome my limitations. So not only is your magazine entertaining and informative, it is inspirational. My goal for this fall is to harvest a big fat doe for the freezer.

I have worn out all the issues I have on hand and am interested in any other back issues you may have available. My earliest issue is dated April / May 2008.

You may e-mail me a list of available back issues and prices Again I would like to say "thanks". I hope T.J. appreciates your efforts. I know that I sure do.

Tom McAlpin
Trezevant, TN

Hello Robin,

I love the *Tip of the Week*, and save all of them in my archery file.

I have been a reader of **Traditional Bowhunter** since the first edition, and it is a great magazine that just keeps getting better each edition. I look forward to the new arrival at my newsstand.

Thanks again to all you hard-working people for the best bowhunting/archery magazine on the market.

Graham Neal
Via the Internet

The Tip of the Week is a free newsletter that is sent to you each week. You can receive the newsletter by signing up at www.tradbow.com. —T.J.

Dear T.J.,

I just wanted to write a short note of praise for David Peterson's *Waiting to Kill* in the Jun/Jul 2010 issue. I've been critical of Mr. Peterson's opinions in the past but just had to tell you how much I enjoyed reading this. His description of a simple moment in time (that most hunters would disregard) was elegant and enlightening. He is a man who knows that hunting is not killing, and his writing is nothing short of art.

My hat is off to you Mr. Peterson ... Bravo!

Brad Isham
Via the Internet

I just wanted to say how much I enjoyed the article submitted recently by a real traditional hunter. I met Mr. Hayes several years ago, down south. I hope to read more from this talented individual in the not too distant future. Thank you also for all of your fine effort.

Jon Jefferson
Via the Internet

T.J.,

I just sat down with a sandwich and my new issue of **Traditional Bowhunter**. As usual, first I started with your

editor's note about the latest hi-tech innovations. How timely, just as I'm about to get into the deep end of the pool with Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife (ODFW) and a "work group" they are in the process of putting together.

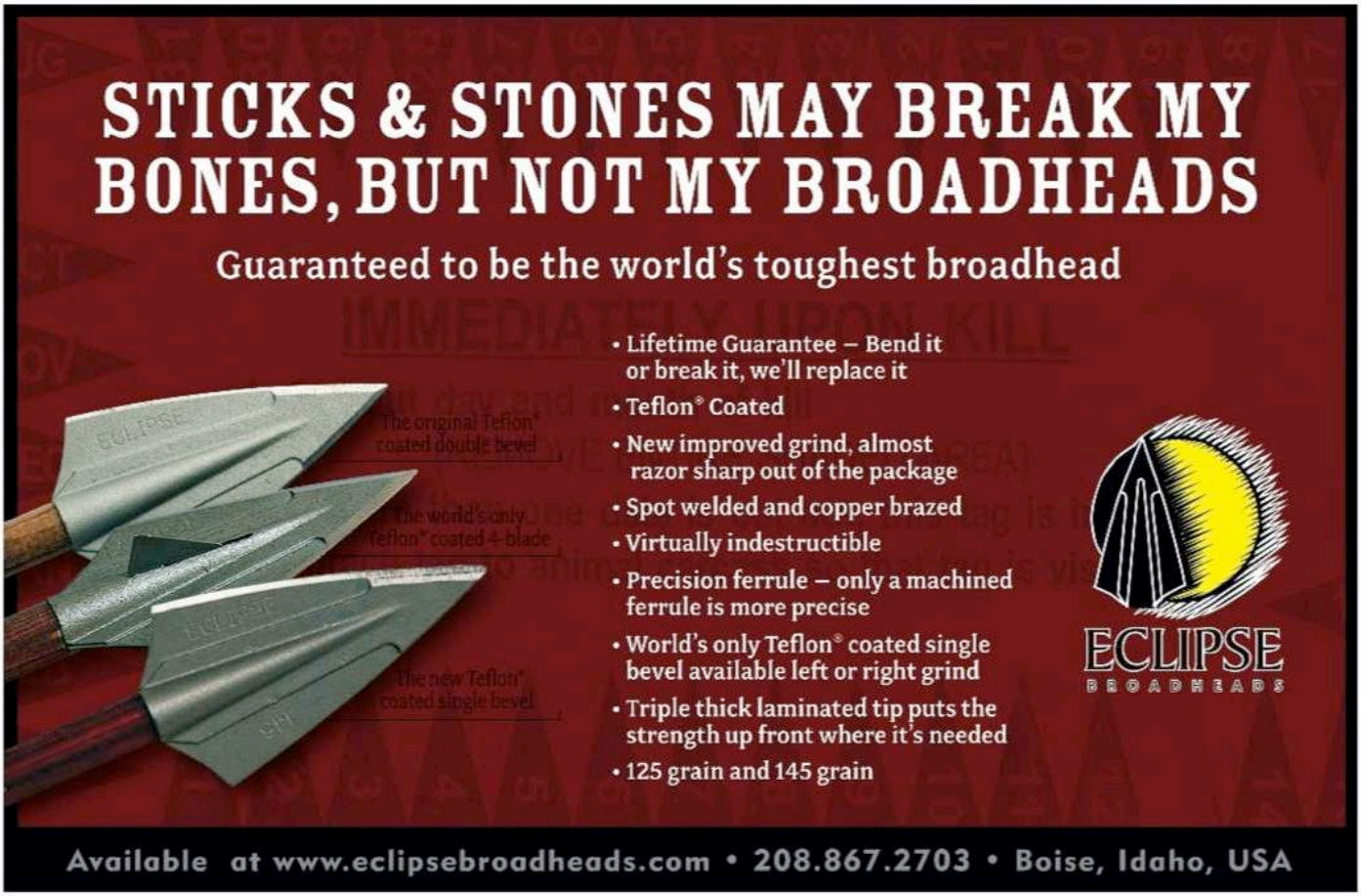
It started at the June 4th, 2010 Commission Meeting where they were hounded by archery hunters requesting lighted nocks and other electronic gadgets attached to bow and arrow, not the least of which was a presentation by a representative of Leupold & Stevens showing off their latest bow-mounted, laser range finder. Leupold had invited the assistant Big Game Administrator to the factory to see The Vendetta and get pointers on how best to present it to the commissioners. I have attached the testimony I provided immediately following the Leupold presentation. Traditional Archers of Oregon has somewhat tired of fighting every new gizmo the hi-tech boys market and decided to take the tact of what we believe would be appropriate in and designated a traditional hunt (there is about 1 ¼ of these in Oregon at this time – Trout Creek Mountains and one week in the old Canyon Creek Archery Preserve).

Following public testimony, ODFW Staff and Commissioners discussed the technology issue (along with other issues such as the new youth cow elk hunt which opens August 1st) with one commissioner stating that maybe we need a hi-tech season where archers can use all these gadgets and even a "rocket launcher." The Director stated that it was just like marketing fishing tackle and suggested that a work group be formed to provide input. I immediately emailed the Wildlife Division Administrator and requested a seat on the work group and mailed a copy to one of the commissioners. He hit on it immediately and stated that "we" should get going on it right away — which I did.

The commissioner and administrator talked by phone and the administrator told the commissioner how they planned to form the work group. I followed up by sharing my idea for a work group, with the administrator, consisting of both state archery organizations, Oregon Hunters Association, ODFW, Oregon State Police and two members of the public at large (one of which testified that he wanted to be able to use the bow-mounted camera). The administrator stated that they had their own list of invitees, mostly from west of the Cascades, and would be sure I was included. I should say that Oregon Bow Hunters top officers have stated there needs to be some restrictions and one V.P. owns a hi-tech pro-shop.

I do appreciate your perspective and insights about this subject and it provides me with more ammunition to take to meetings. I put forth the feelings of Traditional Archers of Oregon back in 2004 when the 65% let-off issue was the hot coal and I've worked on several ODFW committees the past ten years so, it will not be my first bar-b-que. However, any insight and encouragement you have to offer would be much appreciated.

Best Regards,
Rich Thompson
President, TAO



Dear T.J.,

I just received my August/September 2010 issue and was reading the *Letters* column. The letter from Dana Hayden was very upsetting. That a person who had been bowhunting for "Lifetime" would write such a letter is beyond belief. How long is a lifetime? Also, what is wrong with young boys bowhunting and taking an animal in this manner? They are so lucky to have a father to show them the traditional way of life.

I say great job to Todd Martin for showing his sons how to hunt and enjoy the great outdoors a life lesson. This not "Nonsense," it is a wonderful way of traditional archery!

Jack Chambers
Via the Internet

Dear T.J.,

Got home late last night and was going through the mail, and was thrilled when I saw the latest **TBM** issue!

Anyway ... COULD NOT believe my eyes when I read the letter from "Dana" the bowhunter for 40 years! First of all — one does not like to assume — but by the tone of the letter and the way it was written, I would have to assume "Dana" was a female. That being said ... I'm stunned! What kind of bowhunter (40 years experience ... female or male) has something negative to say about kids showing an interest in this sport? Unbelievable!

Kudos to you guys for the way you handled it! Your response was well said, and having the father of the boys answer it was icing on the cake. As a woman bowhunter and mother of two young boys that can not wait until they are old enough to hunt, I really believe this individual showed his/her ignorance.

Of course, it also sounded like she might have had more of an agenda than a concern ... ?

Amy Darling
Via Facebook

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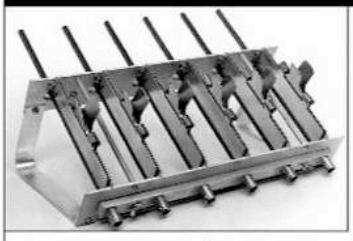

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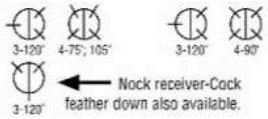

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Dear T.J.,

With all the recent hoopla attendant the new broadhead designs such as single bevel edges and tanto tips, it was refreshing to read Woody Sanford's well researched article on the subject. This balanced and informed piece affirmed what many bowhunters have learned through practical experience. That the two blade, double edge, cut on contact broadhead is superior for nearly all hunting situations. Also, it's hard not to be impressed with the total dedication and excellence demonstrated by Jeff Lander in his quest for trophy mule deer. Great story and a great issue!

Buck Kiep
Via the Internet

Dear T.J.,

I have been a long time subscriber to **Traditional Bowhunter**, but this is the first time I have been moved enough to write to you to comment on something I read in your fine publication.

I thoroughly enjoyed the interview with David Petersen by E. Donnall Thomas. When asked about the greatest threats to hunting today, Mr. Petersen was spot on! It's not the anti-hunters or anti-gun groups that are our biggest threat. It's loss of habitat.

And ironically it is the environmentalists (a.k.a. Greenies) that are at the forefront of protecting our wild public places. Of course hunters do much for conservation, but environmentalist groups do not get the recognition by hunters that they deserve for also keeping wilderness areas intact and open to the public.

I have always thought that we hunters can be a bit close minded.

We are mostly "conservatives" and anything "liberal" is considered threatening to our ideals. We want more hunting opportunities and whine when our hunting areas are developed, but at the same time we sit back and scoff at the "liberal greenies" that step up to protect wilderness areas from development. I consider myself neither liberal nor conservative because I like to think for myself and I share many values of both groups. Yes there are some "liberals" with views I do not share (or understand), but we hunters need to find and embrace at least one common interest between "us" and "them." That common interest being the protection of wildlife habitat. If we really want our hunting heritage to continue, at some point we need to "reach across the isle."

Kudos to David Petersen for putting forth his well thought opinions in the interview and through his writings in the Campfire Philosopher column. The only downside is that the hunters who really need to read this interview and his other work probably aren't subscribing to **Traditional Bowhunter.**

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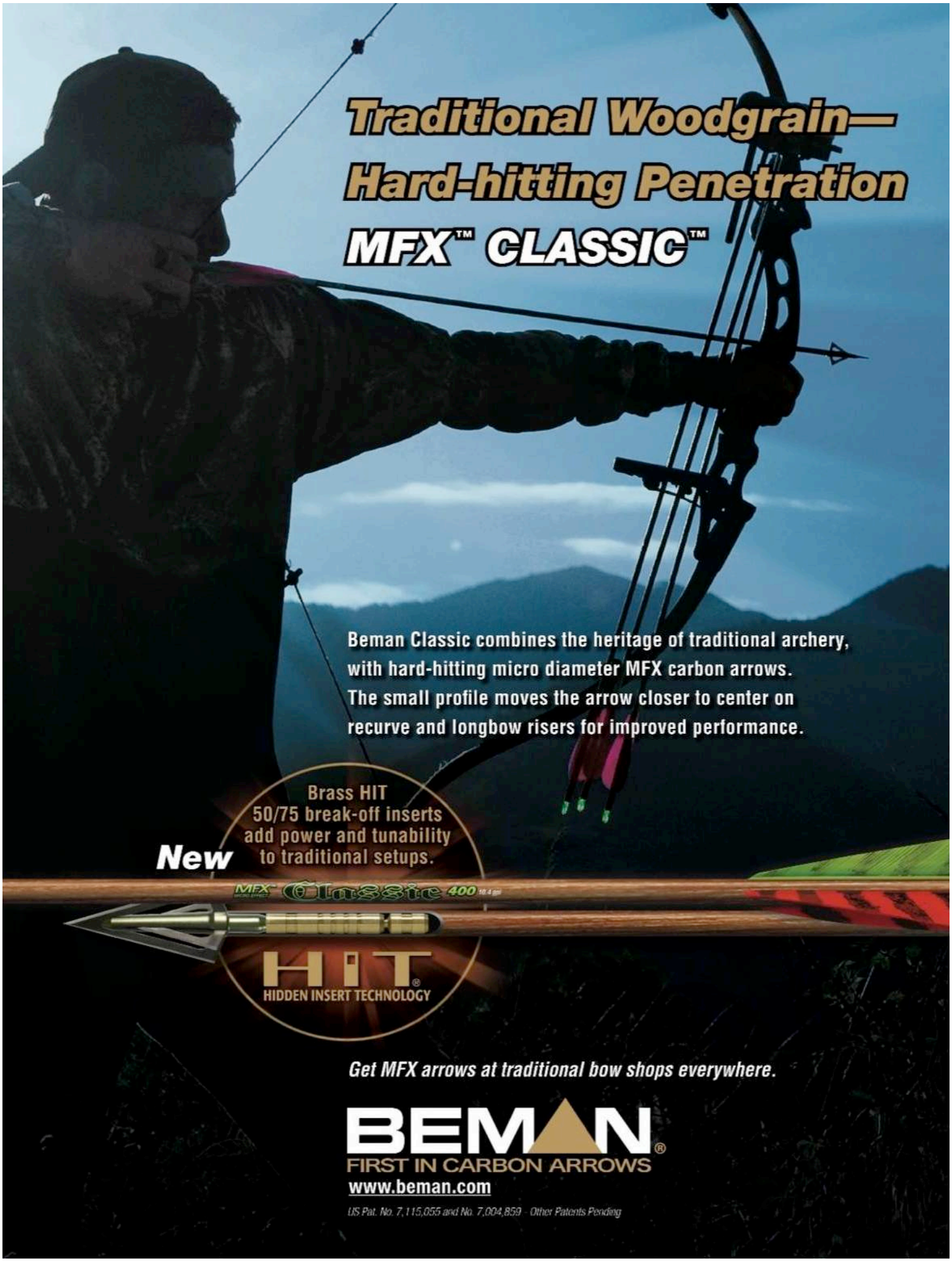
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Hunter by Nature, Archer by Instinct

By Matt Green

At the end of every hot southeastern summer, I begin to long for the crisp taste of fall. Finally, it had arrived. That woodsy smell that invites us to the forest hung heavy in the air, and I could hear a faint whisper from my favorite hunting site calling me. For better than a week now, while out and about, I had been admiring the beautiful array of fall colors adorning the trees, part of what I consider God's artwork. From this transient masterpiece came a perpetual sprinkling of painted leaves that floated to the ground. Temperatures had dropped and local weather guessers talked of the first frost. All the signals were there — time to hunt!

A typical restless night leading up to the first hunt of the year caused me to rise well before the alarm sounded and consequently I settled into my stand earlier than usual. A magnificent sunrise helped to wake the small plot of open hardwoods from its slumber while reminding me how great life can be. I couldn't resist grinning at the privilege to be in the woods hunting. Little did I know that this day held a special memory already in the making.

My hunting career had followed a fairly typical sequence across the years. As a youngster I hunted with a rifle, often hoping just to see a deer. A few years and small bucks later, I was up for the archery challenge and purchased a used compound bow. It would be several years and several missed shots later before I arrowed my first deer, a mature doe, with a bow. But in the past few years I'd grown weary of the "training wheels". A close friend had introduced me to traditional archery, which became a passion almost overnight. I had decided back during the summer that my goal for the season was to take a deer, any legal deer, with my recurve. I had thrown down a gauntlet for myself, and I accepted my challenge.

It was late October and the weather had been unseasonably cool for Alabama. During the early portion of deer season in the South, it's not uncommon to experience high temperatures in the 80s, which typically wane during November. That Thursday, predictions for an overcast sky proved sound. This resulted in a late daybreak, and coupled with my insomnia-driven early arrival, a long wait before it would become light enough to see or shoot. Winds were mostly calm but the previous night the radar indicated a front scheduled to arrive midday. I hoped that the deer might be moving in anticipation of the changing weather pattern.

Due to recent rains the ordinary leaf-crunching underfoot was absent, and the forest floor made no effort to announce my entry. While I appreciated slipping through the woods quietly, I knew the deer would enjoy the same advantage as they tended to their morning business. As fingers of sunlight just started to sneak through the branches, the birds, as if on cue, began their routine fluttering and chirping. This section of the woods has always been crowded with squirrels that seem to get their wake-up call right at daybreak. However, there seemed to be almost no bushytails around, and I began to wonder whether the front would hinder, rather help, game movement.

My portable stand faced west, nestled in a medium-sized hickory tree atop a small ridge. Based on experience there, I expected deer to cross in front of my stand either angling in from my left as they exited a thick bedding area or from the right, traveling a roadbed en route to the bedding site. A small, shapely maple tree stood just behind my set up, its

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branches, still garnished with golden autumn leaves, providing me with perfect cover. This stand had proven productive in years past, and I was eager to spend time in my favorite spot.

At 7 a.m. the darkness was giving way to light. As my eyes swept across the base of a funnel about 70 yards downhill, I saw movement and knew immediately it was a deer. It was too dark to know for sure, but it sported a large body and traveled solo, suggesting that it was a buck. The animal tracked along the edge of the woods into a small open spot at the edge of a bordering pasture. When he left the woods, there was enough light for me to catch a faint reflection — horns! The buck's path angled him away from my stand, the distance between us increasing with each step.

My heart initially sank. However, as he disappeared behind a small group of trees poking past the fence line and out into the pasture, I realized the deer was moving with the wind. I made a couple of contact grunts and hopes that he might cross me as he headed to the bedding area.

After ten minutes passed, I decided he had moved on. While a little disappointed, it was encouraging to know that at least one buck lived in my hunting area. Before finishing this thought, I saw the deer retracing his steps and got a better look. He was a fairly high-racked six or small eight-point. As he did another about face, I began to kick myself for deciding against placing a stand on the edge of the small ravine where he stood. As if teasing me, the buck disappeared again in the same direction as before, and another fifteen minutes ticked off the clock. Locked in on the area where I last saw the buck, I spotted a different deer, head down and trotting back toward the ravine. This was a smaller buck, and just steps behind him, he had the larger buck in tow!

I eagerly watched the lead buck jump a fence 40 yards away and cross a roadbed before a small downed tree made him angle uphill toward my stand. I quickly looked ahead of him and noted a single open shooting lane across their path. I realized, to my amazement, that I was about to have a shot. The small buck became a blur as

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he hurried through the opening. The larger buck was also at a long trot as he stepped into my lane. I bleated loudly, prompting a perfect broadside pose while in one motion I anchored my recurve and released.

Although the shot happened so fast that my recollection of the brief encounter was hazy, I recall following a friend's advice to avoid the urge to peek at the horns once I decided to take the shot. I vividly remember never losing sight of the buck's vitals. I saw impact and heard the sweet smack of an arrow finding its mark. As the pair bolted, I immediately lost sight of them, but noted the time.

I mentally marked a stump near the shot location and eased down my tree after fifteen minutes. A little quick? Yes, but my plan was to look for the arrow and possible blood at the site of the shot instead of cooling my heels from the stand. With great anticipation I went to the spot, but I grew worried when I found no arrow and, worse still, no blood.

The initial escape route led the deer downhill where they would have jumped a small branch and headed back up the hill on the opposite side of the ravine. I optimistically convinced myself that I would pick up a bright red trail on the far side hill. Just then I heard a startled deer blow where the two had run. I froze and hoped that I hadn't bumped my deer from his bed.

Ever so slowly taking up the hunt for blood, what I found was a whole lot of nothing except for a few tracks where the anxious deer had made their hurried exit. The further I trekked, the more nothing I found, and the worse I felt. I was never more confident that I had made a good shot, but the lack of evidence caused me to second-guess what I knew in my mind I'd seen. I backtracked and crisscrossed the escape route I felt certain the animals had followed. Forty minutes later — still nothing. Maybe the slightly downhill shot had impacted a bit higher than I thought and missed the vitals just enough to allow the deer to recover.

As I walked the roadbed heartbroken because I was so certain I had made a good shot, I began to focus on a plan. The weather forecast had assured me there would be a monsoon. How could I find my animal in such conditions? I slowly approached the corner of the property where the barbwire-bordered roadbed made a 90-degree turn to the left and angled up a gradual incline leading out of my favorite patch of woods. Almost symbolically, this roadbed was about to direct me toward home, ushering a dejected hunter out of the woods empty-handed.

As I glanced left, my fears of a marginal hit and a wounded deer were put to rest. The sight hunters dream of lay a mere ten steps away, motionless with antlers protruding above a small rotting tree beside the road.

All experienced hunters understand the feelings associated with recovering an animal, but those emotions defy adequate description for those who don't share the same passion for the woods. Greater still is the elation that goes with finding an animal thought to be injured and lost. That roller coaster travels from the excitement of seeing the animal, to the heart-pounding climax of taking the shot, to a valley of despair when sign proves sparse, back to the gratitude prompted by the first sight of the downed quarry.

As usual, I phoned my wife and parents as they always want to share in the excitement, and then I proceeded to inspect my buck's antlers. A monster? Not by any stretch. A trophy? You better believe it!

My self-imposed challenge of taking a deer with a recurve had been realized. While a simple doe would have met my goals, this success far exceeded my expectations. This was the most satisfying deer I have been privileged to take.

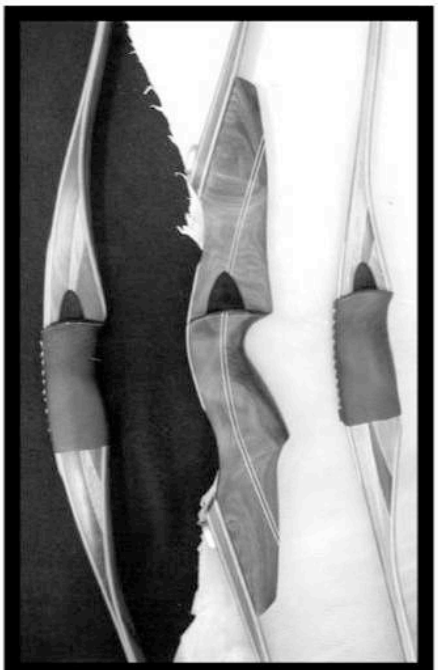
I will always remember the hunt and the time invested in fletching and tuning my own arrows followed by the hours of practice, not to mention the years of hunting that helped me develop the patience to wait the deer out for the ideal shot. On inspecting my buck, I realized that I had made a near perfect shot just behind the shoulder, but the arrow had not fully passed through. There was no exit wound, which explained the lack of blood. Later, I found my broadhead and eight inches of the shaft in the deer's chest cavity.

As most traditional archers will agree, it's not about the kill but the experience. Every once in a while though, we get the icing on the cake and I still can't hold back a smile when I think of that October hunt. Hats off to traditional bowhunters everywhere who have remained loyal to the sport and diligent in setting and realizing their goals. And for those who are still chasing the dream, my rookie advice: stay the course! I can wholeheartedly attest that the efforts will be worth the time invested, the labor involved, and the wait.

Alabama bowhunter Matt Green teaches exercise physiology at the university level. He and his wife Staci have a daughter, Summer.

Equipment Note

The author used a 42# Black Widow PSR recurve, a Gold Tip shaft he crested and fletched, and a 4 blade Magnus broadhead.



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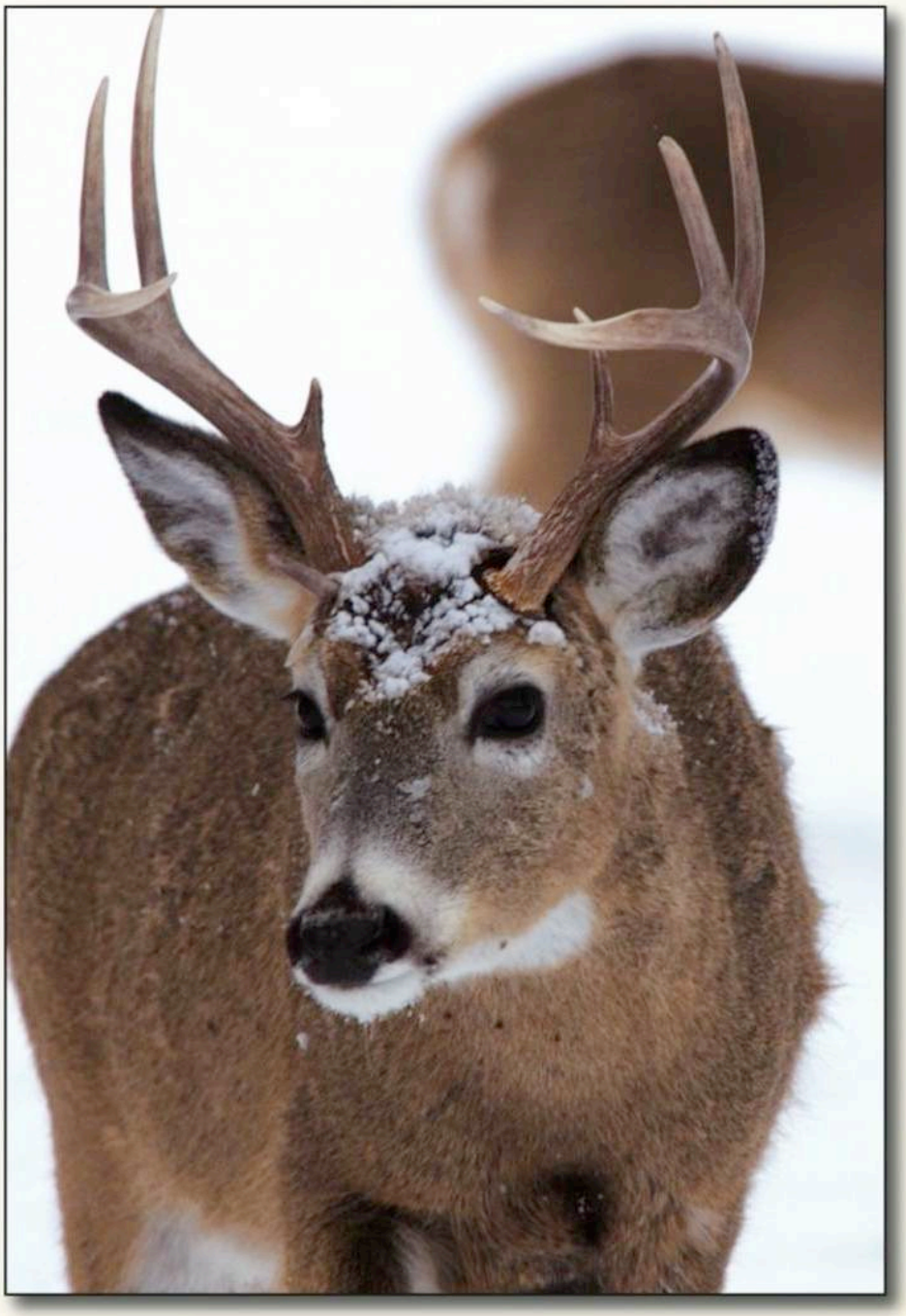


Photos by Don & Lori Thomas

Longbow Rehab

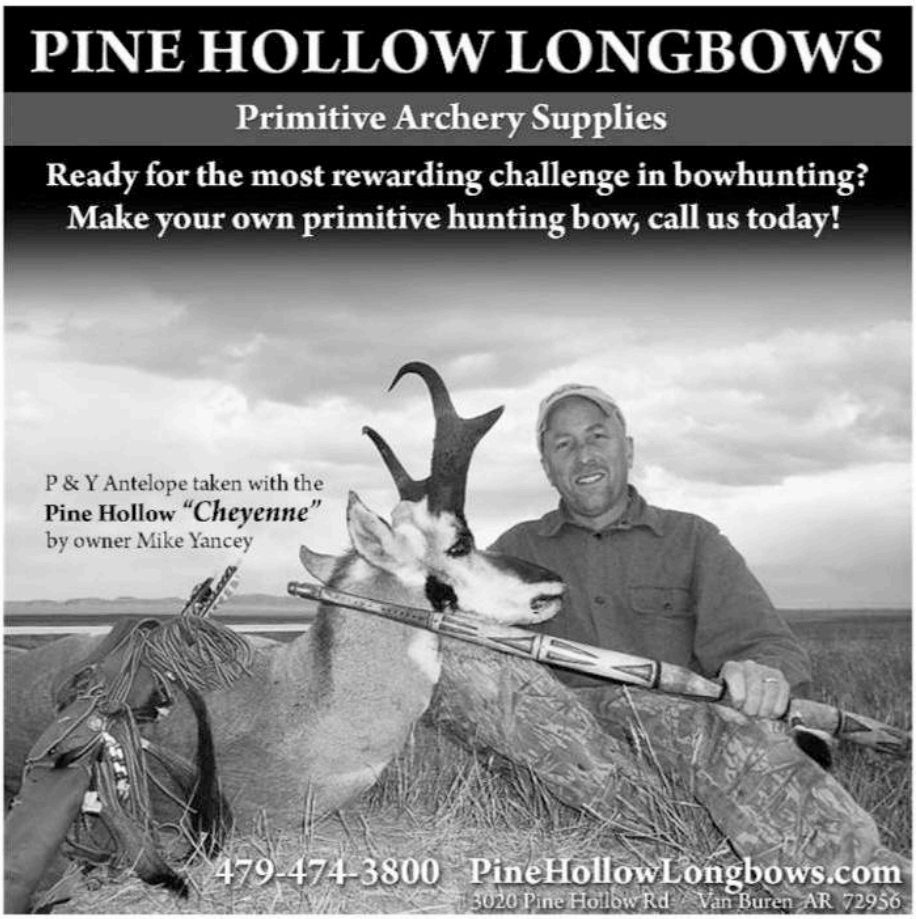
By E. Donnall Thomas Jr.

I usually don't spend a lot of time hunting deer in October. By then, the bucks have abandoned their summer feeding patterns and with the rut still weeks away they seem to become invisible, as if swallowed by the ground itself. I'm all for filling doe tags for the freezer, but even the abundant does around our place can be difficult to pattern then. With bird season in full swing and the last of the year's insect hatches coming off our local spring creek, there are simply too many attractive alternatives competing for my time in October. When it comes to whitetails, I've learned over the years to be patient and wait.

But last year was different. A series of frontal systems sweeping across the high plains produced unseasonably cold, wet weather, and by the middle of the month we'd awoken to snow on the ground a half dozen times. The weather shut down the fishing, sent the local waterfowl winging south, and destroyed the gorgeous autumn foliage we love to photograph in the upland bird cover. It also made my own neck begin to swell, even if I couldn't confirm a similar effect on the bucks in our alfalfa fields. I began to envision scarlet droplets of blood on each new layer of tracking snow. Besides, I was a man on a mission.

And so I set out across the field one October afternoon carrying my bow instead of my shotgun, while the disappointed cries from the kennel registered the Labs' disappointment with my decision. I'd just thrown up the stand I was headed toward two days before, based on fresh data from a new layer of tracking snow. Situated in a stately ponderosa pine, the stand was probably too close to the field to offer much chance of killing one of the three good bucks I'd glassed over the course of the summer. But our freezer was running on empty and I carried a pocketful of doe tags, not to mention a new bow that had yet to turn a deer into venison.

I always experience a special sense of excitement when I sit a new stand for the first time and enjoy the opportunity to test all the hypotheses that went into its construction. Did I read the sign correctly? Will the deer fulfill whatever promises I thought I heard them make?



Furthermore, the first time I occupy a new stand usually produces more action than one might explain by chance alone, probably because no wise old doe has ever spotted me there. And so I settled in against the accommodating trunk of the friendly tree and began to wait with a sense of excitement that contradicted my own low expectations for a crack at a buck worthy of my one, closely guarded either-sex tag. For reasons we'll soon explore, I knew I wasn't going to need big antlers to define a rewarding hunt.

I'd barely had a chance to settle in when I heard the sound of hoofs on rock coming up the hill behind me. I'd already eased into shooting position by the time the first doe popped over the rise and into view. During the upcoming rut, I would have held off to see what was coming up the hill behind her, but I felt no such inhibitions that night. That's one reason I like to get my meat hunting out of the way in October.

But the rest of the procession soon arrived anyway: another half dozen does and young of the year, plus a little forkhorn that certainly needed another couple of years to grow. I quickly singled out a dry doe at the end of the line. Just as I began to concentrate on a spot behind her shoulder, the whole group broke into a brisk trot for reasons that had nothing to do with me. I've seen deer do that often, as if they recognize field edges as danger zones and want to get out into the open where predators have no place to hide as quickly as possible.

I usually don't shoot at running deer, but somehow everything about this situation felt right. I was at full draw when the last doe in line raced by, and the release felt as if I were shooting a pheasant on the wing. The shaft disappeared right where I intended it to go, and I watched with satisfaction as the deer tore out across the field and collapsed in a heap 60 yards away.

An important milestone in my rehabilitation as an archer lay behind me.

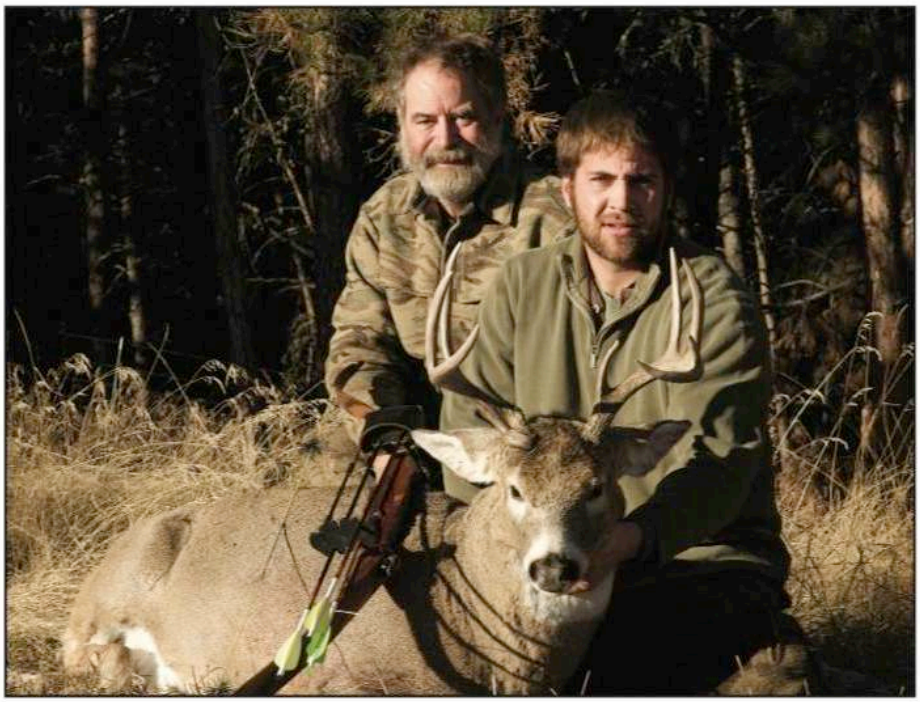
No, this story has nothing to do with my earlier neck injury, from which I have made a full and gratifying recovery. This time, my need for rehab did not reflect any physical problem. It's

just that sometime a year or so ago I forgot how to shoot my bow.

I've never made any claims to greatness as a tournament archer. I feel abundant admiration for those who can consistently shoot tight groups at 40 yards and beyond, but I've never been one of them. On the other hand, throughout most of my bowhunting career I could safely describe myself as a better than average shot, especially during hunting season when it counted. And that was frankly good enough for me.

But suddenly, I just couldn't meet even that modest standard anymore. On the target range, my recurves spewed arrows this way and that for no apparent reason. I flat out missed several deer I should have killed. The problem wasn't target panic or any obvious change in my shooting style. I just didn't seem to be able to concentrate well enough to bring my hands and eyes into proper focus.

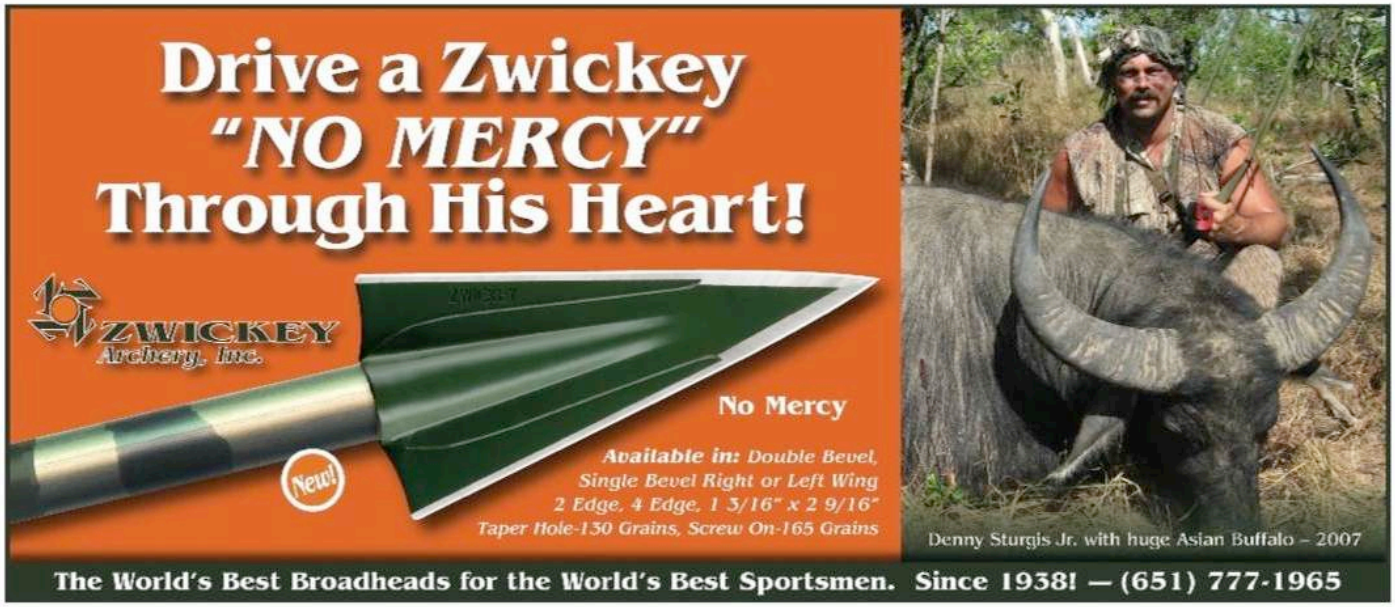
I've had a lot of bowhunters ask me about similar problems over the years, and while I haven't always been able to help them I have offered one consistent bit of advice: Don't blame your tackle! If you were shooting whatever you're missing with well a month ago, the problem probably lies with you, and a radical change in bows or arrows will simply introduce an unnecessary new variable into the process of correcting the problem. And I still believe that's true, most of the time.



Mark Schwomeyer and me with Mark's buck from our place. At my age, helping friends kill their bucks feels just as good as shooting them myself.

However, as I struggled with my own shooting last year I couldn't help but remember the confidence I felt when I was shooting my longbows regularly a decade or so before I made the switch to recurves as my everyday hunting bows. My hand came to anchor effortlessly. I saw tufts of hair instead of whole deer when I shot. When I released an arrow at a game animal I expected it to die, and it almost always did.

Why did I try to fix what wasn't broken by switching to recurves as my go-to bows? A lot of people have asked me that question, including a number of dedicated longbow shooters who seemed to feel positively betrayed by my decision. The answer is simple. I was doing a tremendous amount of travel at the time (as I still do), and getting my one-piece longbows through the world airline system had become a nightmare. My bow tube would disappear in baggage departments for days.



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It felt good to be making venison with a longbow again.

Baggage handlers seemed to delight in running over it with trucks. I inevitably faced long, unnecessary delays in customs. My three-piece takedown recurves seemed to offer a simple solution to these problems, and they did.

Why not just switch to a takedown longbow? Remember that the concept was in its infancy at the time. With all due respect to the innovative bowyers whose tinkering with hinges and sleeves eventually made takedown longbows an attractive option, none of the early versions appealed to me. It's not that they were bad bows; I just plain didn't care for them. And there matters stood.

Then one day during yet another frustrating round of practice at the local range, an old friend, who was evidently starting to feel truly sorry for me, handed me his bow and said, "Here… try this." The bow was a three-piece takedown longbow from our mutual friend Neil Jacobsen, a widely respected bowyer from Lakeside, Montana. As soon as I held the bow in my hand, it felt right in a way no other takedown

longbow ever had, and it shot right where I was looking. That night, I was on the phone to Neil.

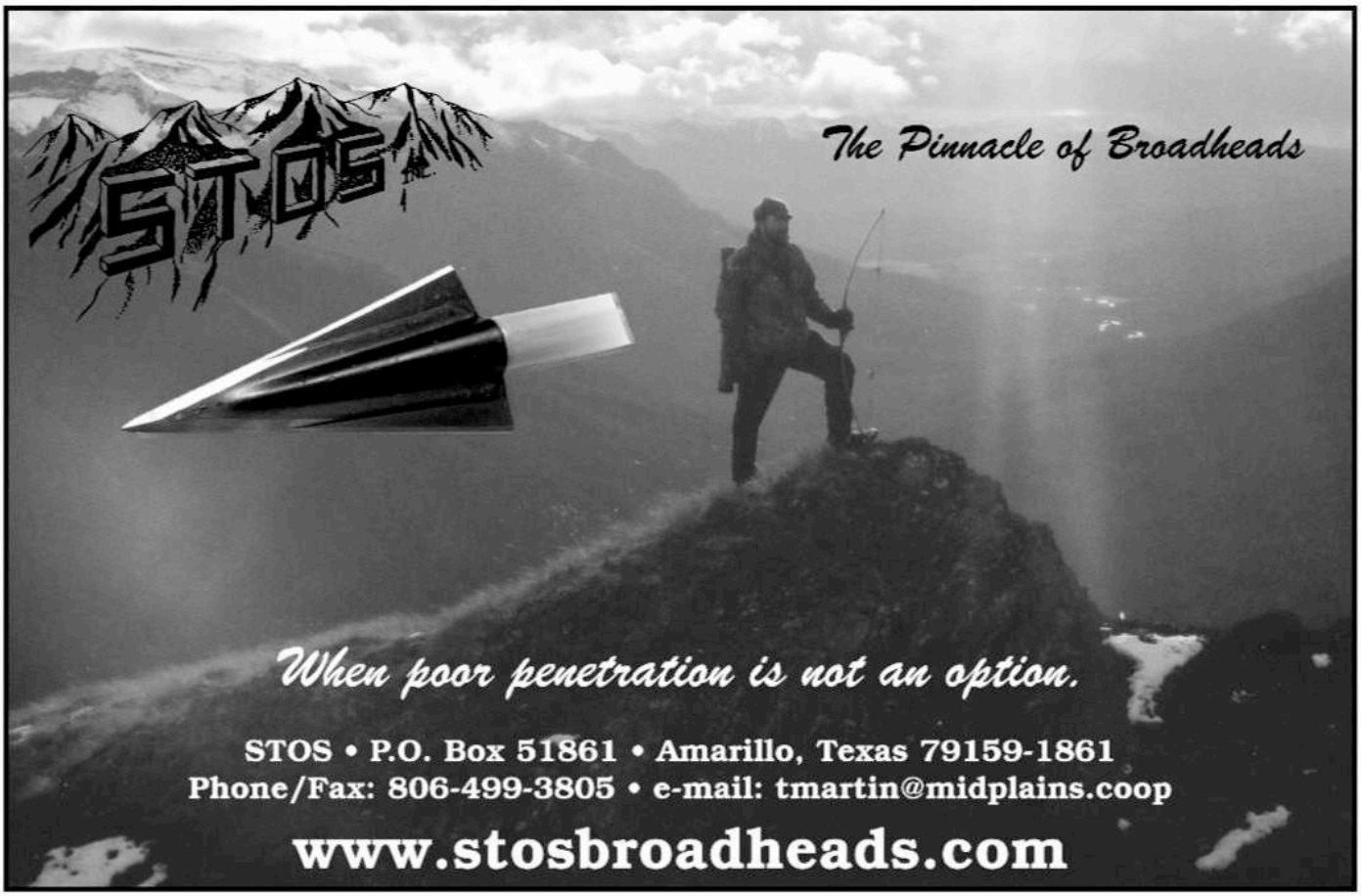
The bow he crafted for me — a snakeskin backed beauty 62" long, pulling 63# — didn't arrive in time for me to carry it that fall, but by the time lion season rolled around I felt ready. Then disaster struck. The first week of the season, I cut the track of a big tom early one morning and set off with the dogs in the face of a developing blizzard. We were a good six or eight hours behind the cat, and after several long miles through rugged terrain the dogs lost the lion's rapidly disappearing trail in a series of cliffs. By the time we staggered back to the truck, we were exhausted and the storm had completely obliterated our outbound tracks. That's when I realized that somewhere along the course of the chase the zipper on the top of my pack had come undone and the limbs of my new bow had fallen out. Recognizing the impossibility of retracing my steps through the storm, I reluctantly abandoned them to the woods. That night, I made another call to Neil, who graciously sent me a loaner for the rest of lion season while he worked on a permanent replacement set of limbs. Unfortunately, I didn't tree a cat big enough to shoot for the rest of the winter.

Spring turkey season quickly taught me that I can't shoot a longbow out of a Double Bull blind. I did carry my new bow on a lot of my old fashioned "run and gun" turkey hunts, but, unusually, never called in a tom close enough for a shot. Over the course of the summer I shot a variety of bows on the range, and eventually realized that I was shooting my new longbow far better — and more enjoyably — than any of my recurves. By fall I was totally committed, but I spent almost all of elk and antelope season guiding brown bear hunters in Alaska. Eager to put my new bow to work on game by the time October rolled around, I felt more excited about the local whitetails than I had in years.

For the first time in many seasons, I felt I had something to prove in the field, to myself if no one else.

No matter what the regulations say, the *real* whitetail season doesn't start for me until November. That's simply a magical time to be in the woods, no matter what the weather or the conditions on the ground. Big bucks appear from nowhere, like mushrooms sprouting on a lawn after a summer rain. Every crack of the rattling antlers carries the potential to produce a close range encounter with a good buck. Deer move all day long, inviting the faithful to abandon work and family and devote themselves to their pursuit. And for once, the whole rut was mine. After returning in early November from a wing-shooting assignment in northern Montana and the monthly diabetic clinic Lori and I conduct on the Fort Belknap Reservation, I had nowhere to go and nothing to do but hunt deer until the end of the season.

As the rut approached, I felt fresh confidence in both my shooting and my new bow. I'd filled three doe tags with as many arrows. None of those shots had been long — I wasn't ready to let confidence overcome my judgment — but one had been at a trotting deer and one had presented a tricky shot angle when a "B-tag" spike walked directly beneath



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my tree. In every case I'd hit the hair I was aiming at. None of the deer made it farther than 70 yards and each recovery proved straightforward. The venison in the freezer left me free to concentrate on what had been my ultimate goal all along: one of the three better bucks that I'd observed in the alfalfa over the course of the summer. Of course they'd disappeared for weeks, but the day of reckoning was rolling around at last.

One of the factors that makes the whitetail such a compelling quarry is its apparently endless capacity for surprise. Not only is every deer different; no two seasons play out exactly the same way. By mid-November, when I ordinarily would have rattled in a couple of dozen different bucks and passed up numerous shooting opportunities, I realized that something was seriously out of kilter on the hill we call home.

It took me longer than it should have to diagnose the problem. The 80 acres of alfalfa is the big attraction at our place, drawing deer in from large, wooded coulee systems on both sides of our property. This year, the deer just weren't hitting the fields. I finally figured out that the young second growth alfalfa had frozen prematurely during the early October cold snap, and a subsequent month of dry weather had destroyed its nutritional value to the deer, disrupting their usual movement

My new baby, although it probably won't stay pretty for long.

patterns completely. To complicate matters further, we hadn't had any tracking snow all month, so as I moved stands deeper and deeper into the woods I had to rely on old sign and intuition.

But the dry weather and absence of snow did mean the deer were using some tiny springs in the coulees as water sources, even though they usually ignore them completely by that time of year. I know these woods well, and soon had stands set up to cover the approaches to several of these springs.

Two days before Thanksgiving, I was watching a doe paw through the ice on one such spring 50 yards uphill from my stand. Suddenly, I caught a flicker of movement through the trees with my peripheral vision. By the time I'd eased my feet into position to shoot in that direction, the deer was browsing fifteen yards away.

The buck proved to be a 4x4, and his rack extended just beyond his ears. He'd broken off one eye guard in a fight, but that didn't bother me. What did bother me was the spindly character of his antlers, which made him look like a young deer that needed another season to grow.

As he stretched out broadside, I faced a tough decision. Time was running down, and I really wanted to kill a

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mature buck with my new bow. I've never cared about record book scores, and despite the meat I'd already put in the freezer, with four grown kids circulating back through the house in search of venison we could always use more. On the other hand, the buck just didn't excite me, and I had to ask myself whether or not the urge to kill a buck with my new bow really justified taking his life. Would sending an arrow through his ribs make me happy? I've learned over the years that if I have to ask the question, the answer is usually *no*. After offering every shot opportunity a bowhunter could ask for, the deer started to pick his way back down the trail, and I let him walk.

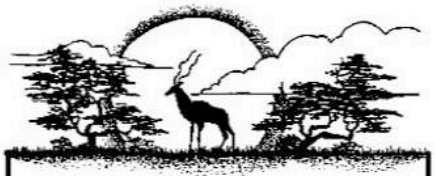
In a truly just world, nature would have rewarded my restraint by serving me a shot at the best buck of my life in the waning hours of the season. But while nature is always consistent, she doesn't care much for justice, at least as we mere humans define it. When the sun finally sank below the horizon to bring yet another season to a close, I climbed wearily up the hill toward home and a delicious meal of A-tag soup.

With surprisingly few regrets, I might add. The freezer was full of venison. Over the course of the season I'd helped three deserving friends to encounters with good bucks on our place … another story in itself that perhaps I'll share sometime. Best of all, I was at peace with my archery again, and that made me ready for next year.

After more than three decades of busy medical practice, Co-editor Don Thomas is down to a monthly diabetes clinic on a remote Montana Indian reservation. He spends the rest of his time exploring the outdoors with his wife Lori, writing, and guiding bear hunters seasonally in Alaska. Most of his 17 outdoor books are available through the website www.donthomasbooks.com.

Equipment Note

In addition to the bow described in the text, Don did his hunting last year with cedar shafts from Kustom King and Magnus 2-blade heads.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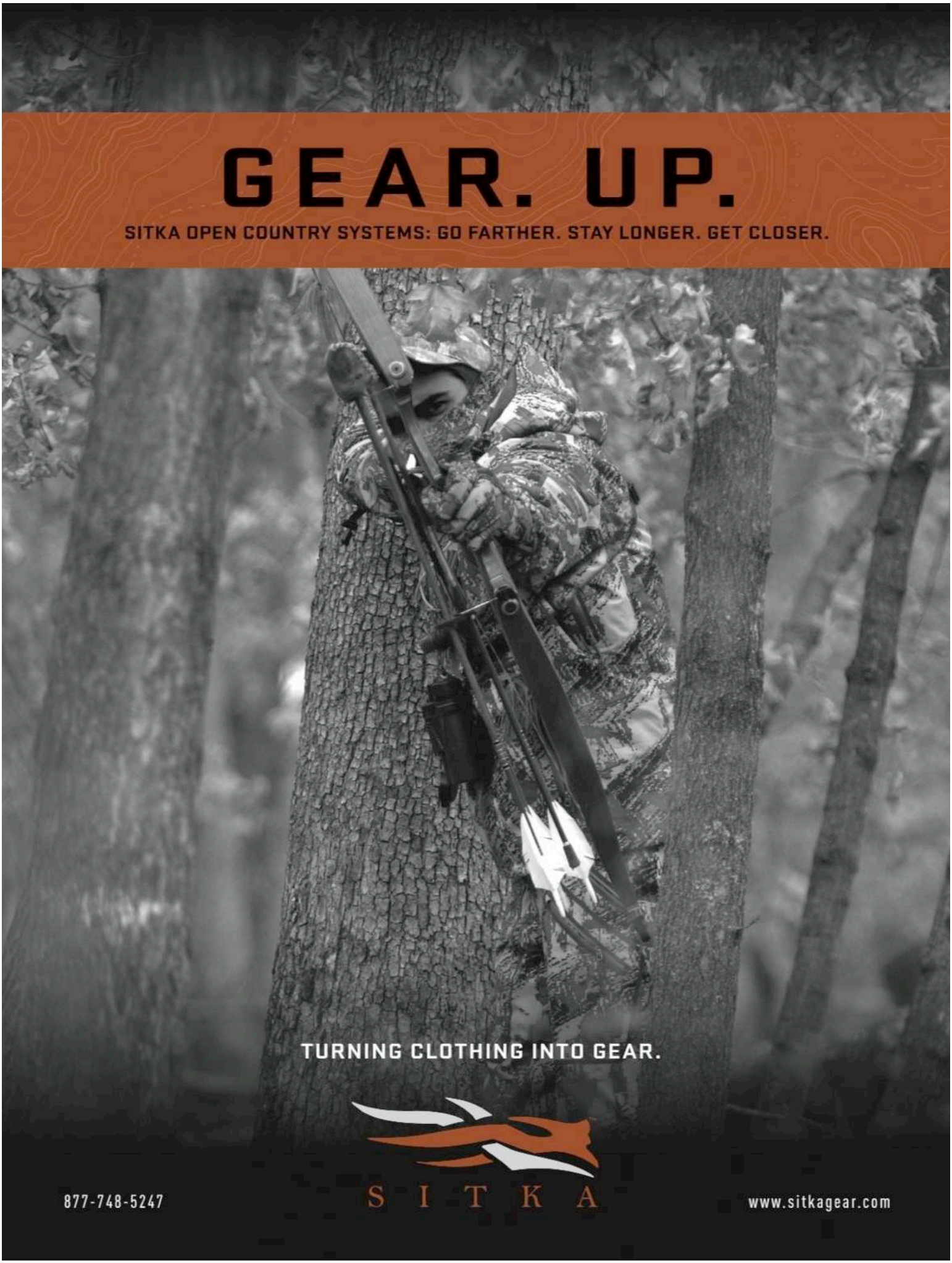
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Move to the Game

By Marv Clyncke

The crashing in the brush above turned into a slipping, sliding doe bailing off the high bank with a very nice 4x4 buck hot on her tail. The steep hundred-foot tall embankment surrounded the small basin full of trees that I was set up in, except for the narrowed down area where the creek ran in and out of my chosen valley. The doe hit the bottom running with her tail between her legs and her suitor right behind. They disappeared in the high bushes across the basin from my tree stand, and just as quickly came bursting out 50 yards behind me and back up the bank. I was praying that they would continue the chase and come under my stand. I'd no sooner got the silent prayer done when they came crashing over the bank and down into the bottom. I grunted a couple times and the doe headed right for me with the buck in hot pursuit. At 15 yards she veered off around a big cottonwood tree and into the bottom of the creek. She dodged around the tree to my right and the buck cut around my side of the big tree like a well broke cutting horse. As he went by at 12 yards I let him get just past me and grunted. He slammed and the brakes and my arrow was on the way ... just over his back!

I was in north-central Kansas hunting on a good friend's farm. Daryll had bought over 1300 acres just for the deer and turkey hunting. A longtime friend, I had pointed Daryll in the right direction on a Rocky Mountain goat hunt and a bighorn sheep hunt, both in Colorado where I make my home. Daryll is an accomplished and very successful two-season hunter, and he shoots traditional and high tech and enjoys bowhunting.

He had mentioned that I was welcome to hunt his place and that I should start applying for a permit as it would take

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one or two preference points to draw the area. I drew on the second application and was really excited about hunting Kansas. I have four friends who had hunted in the area a few miles to the south and they commented about what a great place Daryll had bought, and about the good whitetails they had seen and taken on the land they were on. The elderly woman who sold the farm to Daryll really didn't let much hunting go on, but some hunted it unknown to her. She had a local fellow farm it and she let him hunt. He was a good hunter and had taken some great bucks off the property. Daryll kept him on as his farmer also, and he would be hunting with the bow too, as Daryll decided to keep the place bowhunting-only.

The first year of ownership, Daryll did a great amount of improvements to the land. He brushed out some areas and piled up the brush for the quail. He planted alfalfa and soybeans as a crop to bring in some cash and to also feed the deer and the turkeys. He was making it into a prime hunting area.

My wife, Judy, and I went over for a few days early in the season to help Daryll set some ladder-stands and just look the farm over. It certainly was different than hunting in the mountains of Colorado where I had hunted all my life. Traveling across Kansas from the Colorado border was nothing but flat farm ground. As we got farther into mid-northern Kansas it gradually started changing to low rolling hills with many creek-bottoms snaking through the country. The rolling hills were almost totally farm ground with vast fields of corn, hay, pastures, soybeans and sorghum. The river bottoms varied from a few feet lower than the farm ground to as much as several hundred feet down in gullies and canyons. These bottoms were filled with trees, brush and high weeds wherever the cattle were kept out — perfect deer and turkey country.

I helped Daryll set some stands and move others to more productive looking new trails. We saw many turkeys and quite a few deer, including a couple nice bucks. Mike, the hired hand, told us of several very big bucks he would see in the fields close to dark and early in the mornings. He said one had a long second main beam sweeping around on the left antler. He said he was a 155 inch buck if he matched the right side, but the left was real unique with the two beams and four regular, although smaller, points on the left plus another point on the base. He also had an extra point on the right base giving him seven points on the right and six on the left. I have three mulies from Colorado that have odd antler formations, and was anxious to see this deer, plus some of the other quality bucks he described.

On one of the ladder-stand moving treks Daryll and I accidently turned over his ATV and I really took a shot to my right shoulder. I thought my bow shooting was over for awhile, but the following morning I was better. I could shoot my lighter 53 pound longbow one time and then had to rest the shoulder for a spell. I decided to set a stand anyway and went to the north to a promising looking spot. At about 8:30 a.m. I saw a nice buck working up the bottom, but he crossed 60 yards behind me. He would not even glance my way when I grunted ... he just wasn't interested.

We had a fun day looking the area over and then went out again in the late afternoon. Just before dark I saw a real nice 5x5 coming down the trail to my left. If he continued on he would pass my stand at 15 yards and give me a broadside shot. I was getting pretty excited about having a crack at such a nice buck. I was standing with my lower bow tip resting in a small cloth pocket I had Judy sew onto my wool pants. This lets me keep the bow at the right level pointed at the animal and not straining my bow-arm. All I have to do is lift the bow a few inches as I draw to be on target. The wind was in my face and everything seemed perfect until the buck turned up the 30 foot embankment on another trail. He was going to pass me at about 25 yards, but it still looked good. As he neared the top of the bank I drew, picked a spot as he moved his left leg forward, and released. The arrow looked perfect until it was about three feet from his side. Suddenly it glanced off an unseen twig and went almost straight up. What a missed chance at a great buck! I guessed he would go 140 or a little better. I'm shooting a Black Canyon longbow that Mike Hayes built me so I can blame it onto him! Actually it is as fine a shooter as I've ever launched an arrow from, and I knew it was me not the little 'purtty' in my hand!

A week later I was headed back over to Daryll's for another hunt. Daryll was going to meet me there and hunt too, but after I arrived he called and said he couldn't make it but to go ahead and hunt. I decided to sit a stand to the south as I saw a very nice 5x5 buck on the way in on the access road. I sat until noon, went back to the little cabin that we stayed in, ate some lunch, and took a nap.

I went back out about 3 p.m. and decided to set the ladder stand where I missed the buck a week earlier. I saw a bunch of gobblers and a small flock of hens as I was going in. I had a turkey tag in my pocket, but didn't want to take time away from my deer hunting to chase them. As I rounded a corner in the bean field I walking along, I saw several does with a nice 4x4 buck chasing them at the far end of the field. They were 300 yards away but only 200 yards from the ladder stand. I worked my way in to the stand and jumped a doe on the bank above the little basin the stand was in. She stared at me for a few seconds and walked away unconcerned about my presence. There didn't appear to be any others with her and I felt fortunate that she didn't spook hard.

I climbed into the stand, fastened my safety belt, and relaxed. It was a nice cool day with very little breeze and it was gently hitting me in the face. Perfect.

An hour later the action started. A doe came running down the creek on the main trail to the left of my stand. I stood and prepared for the shot. The buck burst from the brush behind her and I smiled at my excitement as he was a yearling 2x2. I pulled down on him as he went past at ten yards and said out loud, "you're dead." I fully expected a bigger buck at any moment, but he never showed. I glanced around behind me and saw two does and a fawn walking down the trail on the other side of the creek to the east. The creek made almost a complete circle around the stand and there was a good trail 40 yards behind me coming down a cedar choked draw into the bottom. I figured the cedars were a bedding area when I first saw them and I guessed the does

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were coming from there headed for the bean field. I glanced up the draw toward the cedars and saw another deer coming down the trail. When I could see the head I really got excited. He was a large 5x5 with long curving main beams and a two foot spread. He had his nose right on the ground and was on a mission, but at 40 yards was way out of my longbow range. He followed the does and disappeared up the steep bank.

Ten minutes later another small 3x3 came down the same trail and I thought to myself I needed to put a portable stand in there tomorrow when I saw another deer on the same trail. When I could see his head I about fell out of the tree with excitement — it was the big double main beam buck. He was a whopper for sure, but well out of range. I knew for sure I was going to put a portable stand over there now. It was very close to dark so I left everything there except my bow and arrows and silently did a noisy sneak through the high weeds back to the edge of the bean field. At this time of the year everything is dry and leaves matt the floor, so any thought of a silent sneak is a pipe-dream. I did move as slow as I could to minimize the noise. At the edge of the field I put up my old 10x40 Leitz binos to see what was there. I could make out forms in the early darkness but that was about all. I could see at least 30 deer in the field. I was excited for morning, but knew I would have to wait for mid-day to put in the stand as I didn't want to blow all the deer out of the area. The following day was supposed to be sunny, clear and calm, so I figured there would be little action through mid-day, giving me a chance to put up the stand undetected. I would sit the ladder stand and hope one of the big guys would get in the way of my arrow, and if not put up the portable about noon.

I saw only a couple of unattended does that morning and was worried about me doing too much hunting in this one spot, but decided to go ahead as planned. I got out of the ladder stand about 11 a.m., packed all my gear across the creek and looked for a suitable tree. There wasn't much that would work near the trail. I finally decided I would have to use a 6" diameter some-kind-of-a-tree about ten yards to the east of the trail. As quietly as possible I installed the stand and pulled up my gear. I got down out of the stand for a last minute addition to my plan. I took a bottle of Tink's 69 lure and squirted a big shot across the trail and over to the bank of the creek.

As I rested in the stand a few minutes later I thought about the deer coming down the trail from the cedars. I was facing that direction but there was another scraggly tree and several large bushes that concealed me from view until the deer were almost directly below me. The bottom of the stand was only ten feet off the ground as I'm a firm believer that I can't fly, and I don't intend to try! I don't like the angle of the shot any higher, and have used my 'turkey-talk' to get me out of trouble with deer that look at me in the tree. Let me explain. Twenty years ago I noticed that many deer that I didn't spot close to my stand would see me in the tree, especially after a rattling session or grunting. They would blow and I wouldn't see anything more for hours. I started turkey calling whenever this happens and every single time the

deer would relax and go about their moving. I've sometimes put a turkey decoy on a limb at the level of my stand and that works even better. I've always laughed about those deer and how could they think a 6-foot tall turkey would be fully camouflaged and weigh 200 lbs!

At around 4 p.m. I heard a deer running in the leaves to the south. I carefully looked around the tree to my right and didn't see anything but could hear the running animal getting closer. I turned and looked around the tree to my left just in time to see the rear-end of a deer drop into the deep creek on the trail behind me 30 yards. I could hear the deer slurping water and guessed it was a hot, dry buck slaking his thirst from running does. Seconds later he burst up the bank coming my way on the trail. Again I about had heart failure — it was the big double beamed buck. He slammed on the brakes ten yards to my left and stuck his nose in ole Tink's pee. As he took one step forward toward the creek drop, I drew and released in a heartbeat. He caught the movement out of the corner of his eye and was just swinging his head around to see what I was when the arrow slammed in a foot behind the shoulder and angled down and came out between the shoulder and the brisket on the left side. He blew back down the trail as I watched in wide-eyed amazement. I thanked the Lord over and over for letting me have a chance at such an awesome buck. He literally flew a hundred yards and them made an abrupt turn to the left and disappeared. I sat down quivering and shaking from the great excitement of the whole episode and wanted to holler to the heavens but I knew better.

The blood trail was easy to follow to where he turned left. As I got to the spot a deer ran southeast from 20 yards in front of me and the doubt hit like a ton of bricks. He's not dead! By now I couldn't see much, so I made the decision to leave and come back in the morning. It would be a cold November night even though it had been around 50 degrees during the day, and Mike kept the coyotes shot out around the farm to protect the deer and turkeys, so I wasn't worried there. I spooked deer all the way out as I was dancing on the weed-tops. Then the doubt would creep in again.

I was at the bean field edge before daylight, having hardly slept. As soon as I could see I dropped into the bottom and went to the arrow I had stuck in the ground at the last blood. I followed the trail to where it cut up the bank that was now about 40 feet high but with a gentle slope. Again the doubt came to me as I was now over 100 yards from the shot. At the top of the bank there were a number of large cedar trees and high grass that the trail went though. I was having more difficulty following the blood trail here. Again the doubts appeared, but then I would run'em out by saying to myself he was running out of blood.

The blood-trail went between two close trees and was now on a narrow top with brush and tree filled draws on each side. When I came out on the far side of the two trees I lost the trail. I got down and parted the grass and could not see tracks, so I slowly backed up to where I could see scuff marks from his hooves — just a step past the limbs of the cedars. For a few seconds I was stunned that the blood had quit. I glanced right and saw no marks going down into that draw. I took a step to the left where a small depression went down into the 20 foot deep draw there, and saw a deep skid track where the buck hit some soft ground. As I excitedly stepped down into the draw I saw the buck plowed into the leaves and the soft dirt in the bottom. I started hollering like a little kid at Christmas! He was beyond my wildest dreams of ever taking with my longbow! I just sat down and stared at the buck and again thanked the Lord for such a great gift.

I took photos and then looked the situation over. I was at the bottom of the deepest part of the draw, about 80 feet in the bottom of a hole. I had all day to get him out and still on cloud nine 9 (wherever that's at!), so I skinned and caped him, boned out the meat, and hauled it load by load up the bank. I could drive the Tahoe within 50 yards of the pile of meat. Not quite like the miles I was used to packing mulies out of the high country of Colorado!

I tried to call Daryll but couldn't get any service, so I just headed back to good old Colorado. I really don't think I'll ever have a better whitetail hunt than this one — but, I bet I'll try!

Equipment Note

Marv was shooting his Mike Hays Black Canyon takedown longbow, 62", 56 lbs, homemade wood arrows with Pearson Switchblade heads. Mike can be contacted at; Black Canyon Bows, 44 S. Calle Del Sud Drive, Pueblo, CO 81007, 719-547-4359..

Wind Tunnel Turkey

By Jason R. Wesbrock

With temperatures falling, incoming rain on the horizon, and wind gusts exceeding forty miles per hour, the last place I wanted to spend time was in a treestand. Weather notwithstanding, Kevin Grivetti, Tom Ritchie, and I descended off a cattle pasture and into a steep draw in search of my next hunting location. We collected a few molted turkey feathers as we walked along the hillside in search of the perfect ambush site. Deciding on a mature white oak with a straight trunk that would accommodate my climbing stand, we cleared a few shooting lanes while discussing how deer use the undulating terrain on that southern Wisconsin cattle ranch.

The location held a lot of fresh sign, but my particular setup looked questionable. The wind was howling across the draw, blowing uphill from me to the field edge. Accordingly, I had to gamble on deer using a secondary trail downhill and upwind of my position. "We call this place Turkey Heaven," my friends assured me, but I had long ago conceded that I would never be fortunate enough to kill such a bird.

Twenty-four years had already passed since I first took up bowhunting. My introduction came on a bitter cold, snowy December morning on a small tract of family owned property in central Wisconsin. During that hunt, I spent considerable time wandering through the woodlot, studying the white powder at my feet for any sign of animal activity. One afternoon I was searching for deer trails when I happened upon the largest set of bird tracks I'd even encountered. Although I never saw their maker, I later realized that they had been left by a wild turkey. That was when the thought of hunting those birds first crossed my mind.

Over the next several years, several factors kept me from hunting wild turkeys. The properties I had permission to hunt in both Illinois and Wisconsin either had no legal turkey seasons or so few available tags that I could never draw one. By the turn of the millennium, fifteen years had already passed since I first saw those inspirational tracks in the Wisconsin snow, and I had yet to see my name printed on a turkey tag. Up to that point I had only encountered a handful of turkeys in the wild, and was having a difficult time understanding their reputation for wariness.

During Wisconsin's 2000 archery deer season I regularly encountered a pair of turkey hens. They would walk past my treestand, hop up on a deadfall ten yards away, and mockingly stretch their wings. To make matters worse, one afternoon they actually followed twenty yards behind me as I dragged a doe out of the woodlot.

The following year I secured permission to hunt some local land close to my home in Northeast Illinois that was loaded with wild turkeys. More times than not I encountered the birds while still-hunting squirrels during August and September. The turkeys would let me get close to them while I snapped a few photos, and I was sure that one of those birds would wear my tag during the upcoming season. Since Illinois resident fall archery turkey tags are sold over the counter without a lottery system, I bought a license and picked out a spot on my wall for a fan mount.

Needless to say, those Illinois turkeys must have known when opening day arrived because the few that didn't vacate the property suddenly gained an acute sense of caution. I never had a turkey within bow range that season, and the following seven years of hunting that property yielded similar results. At some point I began referring to turkey tags as a state-issued insurance policy that guaranteed turkeys would never interfere with my deer hunting.

In 2007, the State of Wisconsin changed their wild turkey management zones and tag allotments. As a result, nonresidents like me could finally obtain permits throughout much of the state, including the areas I hunted. That autumn I purchased my first Wisconsin fall turkey tag, which I still have since I never so much as drew my bow in the presence of a bird during the entire season.

As a matter of fact, the only wild turkeys I encountered that year I saw during Wisconsin's late archery deer season. By that time, the state's fall turkey season had closed. Apparently my would-be quarry understood this, because a group of some twenty birds wandered aimlessly under my treestand one December afternoon. Despite some frustration, all I could do was smile, laugh, and enjoy watching my jinx continue.

The 1800s stone house made a very comfortable camp.

The next year I once again purchased my customary pile of turkey permits and hoped for a proverbial lightning strike. I saw quite a few birds in both states that season, but none offered a shot. One afternoon in Wisconsin I thought I would finally get my chance when a lone hen — a legal bird during the fall season — began making her way toward an opening that would put her within my range. As I slowly moved my bow in preparation for a shot, she turned and ran away, putting (I call it laughing) until she was well out of sight.

A few weeks later I was standing at the edge of that same Wisconsin woodlot talking to my wife on the phone and preparing to field dress a whitetail buck I'd just taken when the gentle vocalizations of a nearby turkey hen reached my ears. Listening more to the bird than my wife, I figured the hen was roughly twenty yards away through the dense undergrowth.

I told my wife I'd call her right back, grabbed a mouth diaphragm call, and found a suitable hiding place while trying my best to coax the bird into any location that would afford a shot. To my dismay, the bird hung up, running around and putting (again, laughing) until I thought she would fall over from exhaustion. After sufficiently tormenting me, the hen simply vanished into the woodlot. At the end of 2008, my turkey tags found a home in the cabinet where I keep all my unfilled permits.

The rolling terrain provided numerous prime hunting locations.

So it was no surprise that I questioned whether or not to buy a Wisconsin fall turkey tag the following season. Even when Kevin invited me to hunt with him and Tom for a couple days in prime turkey habitat, I felt reluctant to make the purchase. Throughout the years, turkeys and I had always enjoyed a predictable relationship. To paraphrase a hunting partner of mine, I am what turkeys do for fun. Figuring that at least with a turkey tag in my pocket there would be no

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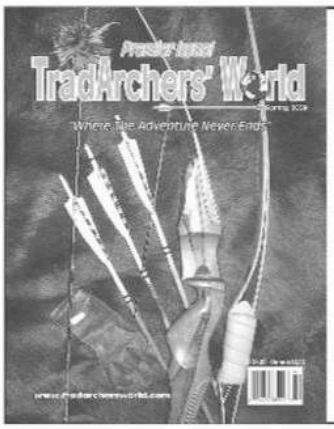

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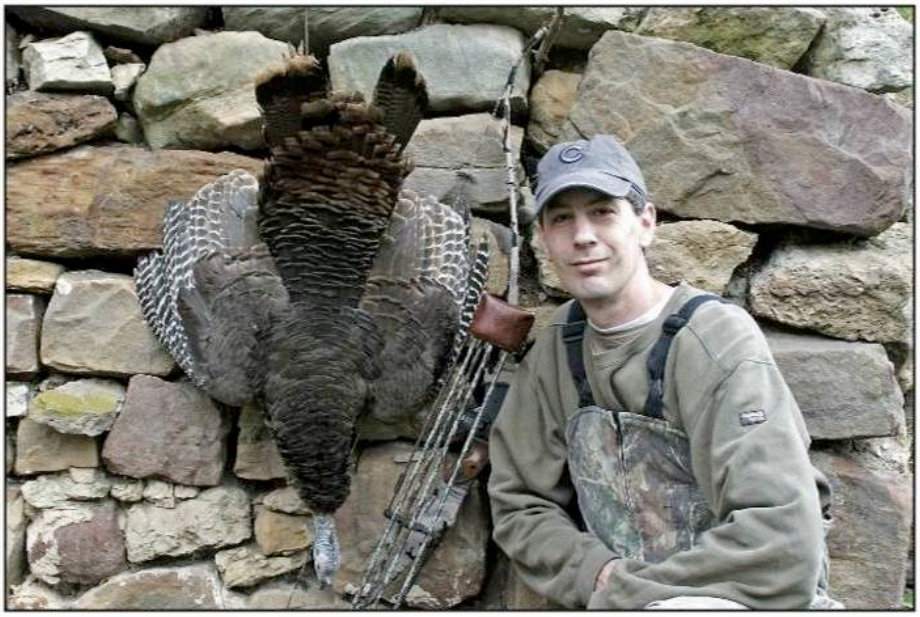
Turkey sign was everywhere.

chance birds would get in the way of my deer hunting, I secured yet another year's fall permit.

After settling in at camp and getting a few hours sleep, Kevin, Tom, and I headed out into the driving winds and located our morning stands. Tom and I were hunting opposite ends of the same draw, while Kevin was a quarter-mile away in a funnel at the base of a ridge. Roughly an hour into legal light, Kevin cleanly killed a whitetail doe and Tom had some close encounters with a flock of turkeys. I saw nothing more than my tree swaying in the wind and a group of three jakes that taunted me by running away through some tall grass immediately after I had lowered my bow to the forest floor.

With one deer on the game pole and hopes of more to come, the three of us scouted and prepared our evening hunting sites. As Kevin, Tom, and I were heading back to the 1800 vintage stone bunkhouse that served as our camp, they reminded me of all the turkeys they had previously encountered in the draw where I would be hunting. Despite no real expectations of ever killing a wild turkey, I told them both that I'd gladly trade a deer for one of those birds. I had taken a lot of deer at that point in my life, but had never so much as drawn a bow on a wild turkey.

After a quick bite to eat in camp, I



It took a long time for me to harvest my first wild turkey, but it was well worth the wait.

headed across the cattle pasture toward my treestand. The mature hardwoods in the draw did little to slow the punishing winds testing the breaking strength of every tree trunk, limb, and branch in sight. I stepped into my climbing treestand, secured my safety harness, bumper-jacked my way sixteen feet above the ground, and settled in for what I was certain would be an uneventful evening.

Much to my dismay, a herd of cattle had assembled at the northern end of the draw, essentially cutting me off from the evening deer movement. For the next few hours I remained entertained by the distant mooing of beef on the hoof, flying debris hitting my face, and three raccoons that were not impressed by the sight of a human in their tree.

With daylight beginning to fade, I made a routine glance over my right shoulder and noticed a parade of turkeys heading south on the upper trail just inside the tree line. If they stayed on course, they would soon pass through one of the shooting lanes directly behind my tree. Despite the impending close encounter, I knew I was once again about to be outwitted by an animal with a brain the size of an acorn.

When I felt the majority of their heads were obstructed, I lifted my bow off my lap and slowly turned to my left. Normally I prefer to stand while shooting, but I didn't want to risk any additional movement. Since I was in a climbing stand, I had no cover except a thin backdrop of trees whipping in the wind. To make matters worse, if the turkeys reached my shooting lane they would be at eye level due to the rising terrain. With any luck, the wind would conceal my movements because soon there would be nothing but air between my quarry and me.

As the first bird approached my shooting lane, I identified it as a hen and wondered if I should wait to see if any toms or jakes were bringing up the rear. "Don't get greedy here; just shoot the first one that steps out," I told myself as the lead hen cleared the last tree blocking my shot. I slowly eased back my bowstring and found anchor, amazed that the birds had not so much as broken stride. Taking careful aim with an appropriate lead on the walking hen, I felt the serving slip through my fingers and watched my arrow take flight.

In less time than it takes to tell, my fletching disappeared through the turkey's right side, lodging in the base of a small hickory tree. The bird twitched once, walked ten yards and folded to the ground. A few seconds later it laid down its pale blue head, letting me know that after 24 years of waiting I would finally have to punch a wild turkey tag.

To say that I was in total shock would be an understatement, but my surprise did not arise from the fact that I had hit the mark. If that were ever in doubt I wouldn't have dropped the string. Rather, I couldn't believe that after more than two decades of dreaming and years of consecutive unfilled tags, I had just taken my first wild turkey.

After gathering my legs and descending the tree, I punched my tag and affixed it to the turkey's leg as the howling winds were joined by horizontal rain. Despite miserable weather conditions, I made the hike across the cattle pasture a little more slowly than usual. I had waited a long time to walk out of a woodlot with a turkey slung across my shoulder and wanted to savor the moment, knowing that Thanksgiving dinner would be extra special that year.

*His turkey jinx finally broken, regular **TBM** contributor Jason Wesbrock is looking forward to pursuing a few other species that have given him fits over the years. It's a long list, by the way.*

Equipment Note

The author killed this turkey with a TradTech Titan recurve pulling 56# @ 32" and a 125-grain Ace Standard broadhead mounted on a carbon arrow.

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From Jeers to Cheers

By Robert Lindberg

I was the only one on the caribou hunt without hard-sided luggage. Rifle cases and bow cases had filled up the floatplane when we loaded in Schefferville. After a two-hour ride, we landed at the camp at about 11:30 on a beautiful sunny day and started unloading the plane. We were in a hurry because there were caribou everywhere and the guides were telling us that they would take us out as soon as we were ready. Our excitement level rose when the guides told us there had been over a thousand caribou there the day before, and we could see that hundreds were still streaming through.

Nobody asked where my bow or gun case was, and the fact that there was one hard set short didn't register until we got into the cabin to get ready for our hunt. Caribou on the ridges continued to form an undulating horizon, and the guides were shoving sandwiches at us trying to get us to hurry out for our first afternoon's hunt. Rifles were being extracted from their cases and shells were being loaded into clips. Compound bows were being tuned and tweaked. When I opened my large camo bag, pulled out my two-piece longbow and started to put it together and string it, standup comics in Vegas would have envied the laughs I got.

"You're going to hunt with *that*?" one guy asked me.

"You sure you don't want to borrow my spare rifle?" another wondered.

"No thanks," I replied. "I think I'll be okay."

As we loaded into the boats, I could tell that my guide seemed to share the same opinion when I caught him looking at my longbow and shaking his head. "I'll take you to an island that they cross," he said. "The shots shouldn't be longer than ten yards or so."

"That's great," I said, sluffing off the slight. "I like being close."

True to his word, Rick took me to a small island that split a river passing through two larger bodies of land. He pointed to the three-foot wide trail the caribou had been using that looked like it had been recently roto-tilled. We went to a small pine tree about three feet high, situated ten yards from the trail. "Kneel down here and they will come through right over there," he said. Then he hopped back into the boat to take a gun hunter up on the ridge a half-mile away.

I looked around my spot and wasn't really keen about the set-up. There was no cover in front of me, just a three-foot tall pine tree to my left. There were some bushes behind me that would break up my outline, but that was it. Unless my camo worked really well, I was basically out in the open with no place to go. I noticed that at the end of the bushes, about three yards from where I was kneeling, there was another small, slick, muddy trail about a foot wide off the end of the last bush. "Well,"

The floatplanes at Shefferville.

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I thought, "I'll just kneel here and see what happens. After all, it's only the first day."

So I put my pack down, took an arrow from my bow quiver and put it on my string to begin my wait. As it turned out, it was a brief wait, for about ten minutes later things began to get interesting.

Off to my right I heard the "clip, clop, splash" of caribou hooves hitting the river. I moved my eyes slightly, keeping my head still to avoid excess movement. I saw a small herd of six caribou coming onto the island, right on the trail about ten yards from me. They were four cows and two calves, so I wouldn't shoot any of them. But with the wind in my face, I figured they would tell me just how well my set-up was going to work if and when a bull came along.

The caribou stopped and shook the river water off, showering the area with heavy spray that turned into rainbows in the afternoon sun. Then they started to feed on the grey-green lichens to the side of the trail right in front of me. One old cow looked over at me and couldn't figure out what I was, although she knew I was something strange. She stuck her nose in the air and, as her nostrils flared to the size of dinner plates, snorted in a snout-full of air trying to catch my scent. But a warm breeze was flowing from her to me and she couldn't learn anything with her nose, so she took a couple of steps closer and snuffed again, trying to catch the scent of the weird object next to the tree. Her head wobbled from side to side as her curiosity grew, and she took a few more steps closer before snuffing again. She was now about five yards from me and still couldn't figure out what I was. So she walked a little closer and, with each step, would take another nose-full of air, searching for my scent.

On the outside I was as still as a dead rock, but my insides were vibrating with excitement as I enjoyed the whole experience. But then I began to get a bit concerned when she came to a stop three feet away from me, a little close for my taste. I didn't know what to do. I didn't really want to spook her and scare away any other animals that might be coming, but I didn't want to wind up as pink stuff on her big, fat

The view from Pons Island.

hooves either. While I was pondering my options, she took two more steps toward me. She was less than eighteen inches away when that huge, black snout reached forward within inches of my face and I heard her huff in another great lung full of air. As her nostrils flared right in front of my eyes, she sprayed caribou spit in my face. I could have reached out and smooched her.

But instead of that, I did something really dumb: I yelled "BOO!"

In the next microsecond she went airborne, turning inside-out trying to get away from whatever it was that had scared her. Her eyes grew as big as a full moon on a clear night. Hooves flailed in the air for traction that she couldn't find. When she hit the ground, mud started flying everywhere and I really felt worried about getting trampled into the lichens. But then she and the other five caribou got themselves together and thundered off for parts unknown, leaving me rolling on the ground and laughing in the mud.

Ten minutes later, I heard the sound of clip, clop, splash again, only this time from behind me, from two cows and a really nice bull. They stopped suddenly, standing in the river on the other side of the bushes that had been my backdrop but which now formed wonderful cover between the animals and me. They allowed me to turn quietly and get ready for them no matter which way they decided to go. By moving very slowly, I got my head into a small hole in the brush so I could keep an eye on them. I thought about popping up over the bushes and taking a shot at the bull, but I didn't know if that was legal or not, as they were standing in the water. So I decided to wait and see what would unfold. I only had to wait a couple of minutes, which seemed like cen-

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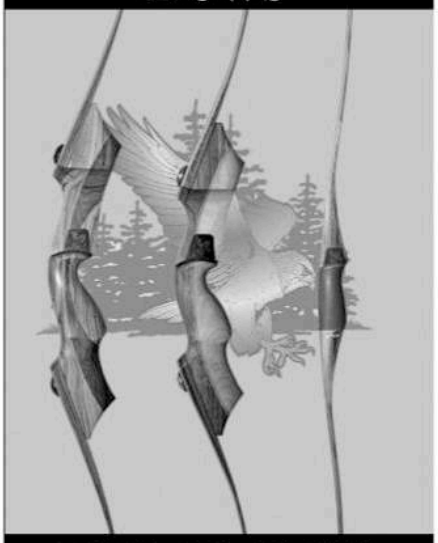

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turies, before things started to happen.

First one cow started to walk toward the small trail about three yards off the end of the bushes to my right. Up from the river she clambered, heading off across the island. Then the second cow did the same, passing on the same trail and leaving the bull standing by himself in the river. He finally he took a step and I could see that he was heading in the same direction as the cows.

I turned slowly on my knees, bringing my longbow up as I watched him out of the corner of my eye. His huge antlers were scraping the bush I was kneeling behind. As he started up the bank, I drew my bow. As his back hooves hit dry ground. I picked a spot on the back part of his right ribs and let the string go. When my Brodhead struck his side, blood exploded from the massive hole that it made. I could feel the hot blood splash on my face. Then he kicked in his afterburners and streaked off across the island.

I'd been hunting for less than two hours and had shot my first caribou. While I was waiting for Rick to come with the boat, I walked along the blood trail the bull left behind him. Blind Lemon Jefferson, the famous blues musician, could have followed this one. The lichen, the Technicolor scrub oak, and the deep green pine trees were all splattered with more blood than I thought any critter could hold. I got to the end of the small island, and saw the bull floating in the river, confirming the adage that wounded caribou always head for water. About that time, Rick showed up with the boat and fished the animal out of the river. We dragged him to shore, took pictures, and field-dressed him before loading him up for the trip back to camp.

The author with his first caribou.

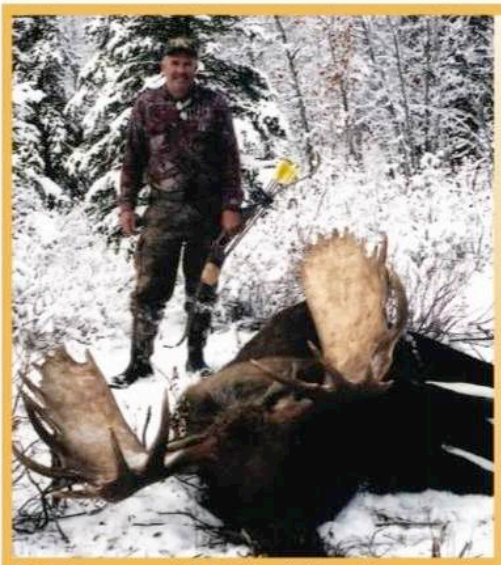
Rick and I were working on the animal as the other guys came straggling into camp. I was the only one who had a caribou. Handshakes and congratulations replaced the laughs I had received a few hours before.

And would you believe it? Nobody asked me if I wanted to borrow a rifle for my second caribou.

Robert Lindberg hails from Keene, New Hampshire.

Equipment Note

On this hunt, Bob used a Wes Wallace, Royal longbow, Gold Tip carbon arrows, and Snuffer heads.



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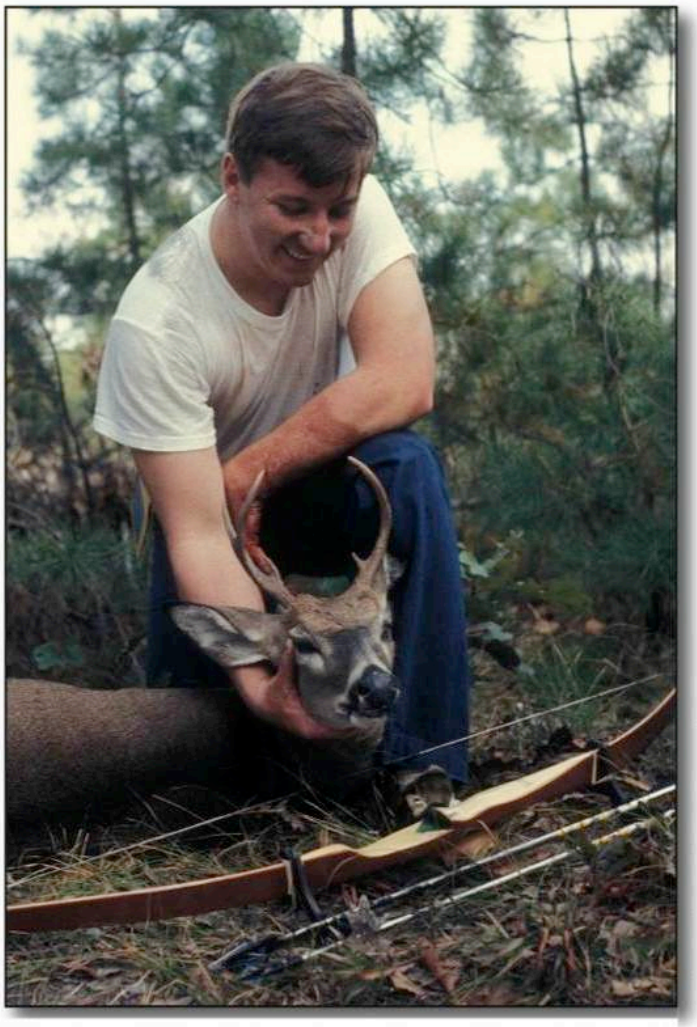

Photos by Bob & Linda Steiner

Ground Level Tricks

By Bob Steiner

The second week of October had been everything an outdoorsman could ask for here in northwestern Pennsylvania. The maples were crimson and yellow, only days from dropping their leaves. Apple trees hung heavy with ripe fruit and the corn along the hillside was dry, the stalks rattling in the wind.

My mid-afternoon solo ground hunt was nearing an end. I had made a mile loop from the car, following a small wild trout stream in search of muddy bank crossings that would tell me where deer were bouncing across on their way from the unkempt apple orchard to bed in the thick hillside to the east. After half a mile, I crossed the stream on an abandoned railroad trestle. I stopped for a moment to watch for trout rising to cinnamon caddis in the big pool below, and then climbed the high bank to the north.

I eased through the ancient oaks that had avoided woodcutters' saws by living on state-owned property for a hundred years. There were no signs that deer traveling to the orchard had lingered here. The white oaks had taken the year off and produced no acorns.

My return course to the car put the wind on my left shoulder as I slowly skirted the edge of the apple orchard. I was hoping to stand up a deer that had decided to bed in the thick weeds and briars under the apple-hung limbs. While the wind was perfect for this phase of the hunt, it was also allowing my scent to travel into a large hillside cornfield. I had planned it this way.

When no deer showed in the orchard, I quickly moved to the tractor road. No more being sneaky; now was the time to hustle. Just above the parking area where my car sat was an excellent bit of whitetail escape cover. I had often seen deer moving through this cover to cross the road and enter an adjoining thicket. At the end of the corn, I put the wind at my back and walked fast down the field edge grass to the crossing.

Just as I arrived, I spotted an adult doe standing statue-like ten yards away. She was convinced that the thicket had her covered. I methodically drew an arrow from my quiver, nocked it, and took a few small steps backward to get an opening at her chest.

The bright pink-and-blue fletching disappeared high through her rib cage and she went down within 40 yards. As I readied her for the drag to the car, I realized that many of the nearly 200 deer my wife Linda and I have taken on public land in several eastern states had fallen for the same small handful of ground hunting tricks.

The self-drive, using your own scent or a small amount of noise and a circular hunting pattern, has worked often to present us with close, standing shots. Having two hunters hunt parallel at a 90-degree angle across the wind is also effective. Generally the downwind hunter gets the action, but deer bounced from hiding will often run into the wind and then suddenly slam on the brakes when they see or smell the other hunter, creating a shot opportunity. When using this maneuver, we seldom march like pheasant hunters going through a field. We both hunt slowly, stepping softly and stopping frequently to watch.

When we have a buddy or two hunting with us, we rely on the same type of hunt plan, only we use several hunters for blockers on good runways. Deer kicked up will often run a short distance, and then stop to watch behind them. When they do this in front of one of our blockers, they get the shooting. Oftentimes a deer skirting out of the drive will present

A younger author with a buck taken while stalking.

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Getting up close and personal.

a shot to one of the drivers. If the deer is walking by close, start your draw and try speaking to the animal. Really. If it stops at the sound, as it often does, you will get a standing shot.

In 1970 in the Pine Barrens of New Jersey, Linda and I, along with another couple, put on a sunny midday deer drive. The girls, and they were that then, were the standers. The guys worked through some nasty, thick, brushy, flat, tick-infested and sandy ground. A six-point buck trying to sneak out caught one of my broadheads riding at the front of a smoke-camouflaged aluminum arrow and I tagged my first traditional bow antlered buck.

In Pennsylvania, after the first two weeks of archery season, when moving on the ground we are required to wear varying amounts of fluorescent orange. This is because our small game, turkey, early flintlock, special youth, and senior firearm deer seasons are all open at the same time. Frankly, we hunt public land and want to be seen by others who are out there as well. If we miss an opportunity for a deer in the name of safety, oh well — we'll live to hunt again.

We have also learned that when all those other folks are in the woods, deer will be moving all day long. We especially look forward to the opening days of the other hunting seasons. By easing along and watching ahead, an archer can often spot deer bounced by other hunters. These deer are generally concerned with what is behind them, not ahead. Our fellow hunters are our allies, not enemies. Study the regulation book and plan to be where hunters pursuing their "game of the day" will chase the deer that they encounter to you. This is an outstanding time to hunt game travel funnels such as saddles between hills, fence crossings, and old fence lines. We often lean against a tree and move at an intercepting angle when we see game approaching.

Several years ago, I sat at the top of a little saddle, with a large thicket at my back and the wind crossing from left to right. As I drove to my parking spot, I had seen two squirrel hunters entering this wood patch. Knowing they were moving through the oaks below me, I settled behind a brush pile, leaning against a large oak. I didn't have long to wait.

A flash of motion moved through the woods in front of me and then materialized into a large doe and her fawn trotting in my direction. Instinctively, I drew my bow and began

The author with a doe taken from a ground position.

to swing, with no intention of shooting a moving deer. The doe saw my motion and stopped broadside at eight yards.

An instant later she was doing the dead deer run, with pink and blue fletching pasted on her near side. I don't even remember releasing the arrow. I guess that's why they call it instinctive shooting. Hunting public land on heavy use days is just a matter of figuring out where the deer will try to escape from and travel to, and then getting in between.

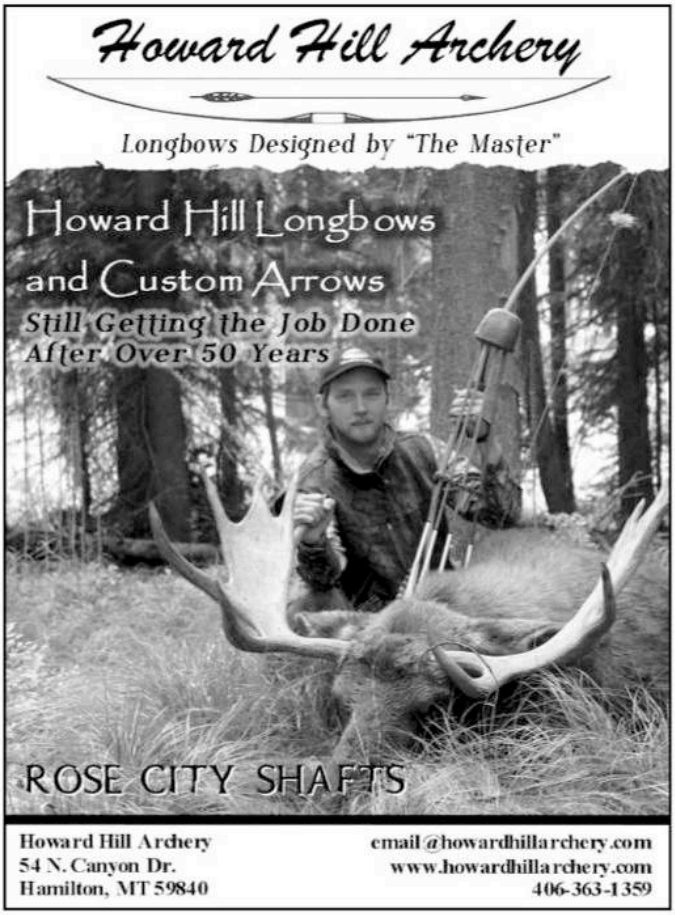
Before I retired, I had to use vacation for my hunting time. I could never understand why anyone would take a day off and only hunt several hours in the morning and evening. If you don't want to mess up your stand area, go take a walk with your bow in another spot and do some scouting. You may learn something that will pay off a little later.

Hunting rugged central Pennsylvania in the early 1970s, Linda shot a buck at five yards. She had been easing along and encountered a deer trail previously unknown to us. She hunkered down by a stump to take a break and was there only minutes before several bucks entered her shooting comfort zone. The five-point provided the first good shot. She had taken a break in a high percentage place and was relaxing but ready.

While you are scouting, use a few simple strategies and you may tie your tag to a deer when you least expect it. Moving hunters need to take advantage of terrain and vegetation features. In the early years of my bowhunting, I needed to be on the move. When I came to large boulder formations, I would ease from one to the other, climbing any that could be climbed and playing aboriginal hunter. A large doe fell to this strategy with a well-placed arrow. If you have rocks or brush piles left by logging, small evergreens, or any woodland obstacles, move from one to the other, stop, and peek around them.

When approaching a drop-off in the terrain, don't scamper to the edge. Slither to where only your head peaks over, so as not to give game a look at a full human silhouette. Walking directly to a large tree on the edge and peeking around it works as well, whether going downhill or up.

For breaking my outline while moving, I like to use old logging roads cut into hillsides. By staying back from the downhill edge, you can still-hunt with only your head and



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shoulders exposed to game above and below you. Plus, the flat road surface provides surer footing. If the path is well traveled by people, most of the sticks and leaves will be already broken, crunched, and flattened for quieter walking. Easing along a logging road provided me with a 12-yard shot and my first traditional bow kill, a button buck, in 1967.

Two years ago, I hunted through a large, steep, grapevine-infested hollow. Motion caught my eye and three bucks trotted down onto the logging road where I was leaning against an oak and catching my breath. A spike passed by at twelve steps, a five-point stopped broadside in the open and rubbed its antlers under twenty paces away, and a four-point trotted past at 20 yards. The five-point that provided the best shot was not legal in Pennsylvania. Even our small bucks must have three 1-inch points on a side to be fair game. One of the points on the side with three was obviously shorter than required. Even though the bucks were all too small to shoot that time, I still consider logging road or trail "pussyfooting" a viable technique for the lone midday hunter.

It's time to fill the freezer with the "alpha" deer. Are you bored with hunting a few morning hours and then sitting around for six hours until evening, or worse yet, working around the house in the middle of the hunting day, burning valuable vacation time? Get out into the woods and make something happen. Sneak along from cover to cover, terrain edge to terrain edge, while hunting into and with the wind. Hunt short loops around cover, alternately making a little noise, creating a self-drive, and then moving stealthily. Get a buddy and do some deer pushes for an hour or two. Read the hunting regulation book and head for a game funnel during the peak hours of concurrent hunting seasons. Ease along a hiking trail or logging road where the footing is quiet. Get out and hunt the midday, when the wind is blowing.

None of these ground-hunting techniques work all the time … but I promise they all work.

Bob Steiner is a retired Pennsylvania Waterways Conservation Officer. He and his wife Linda live in a log cabin in western Pennsylvania.

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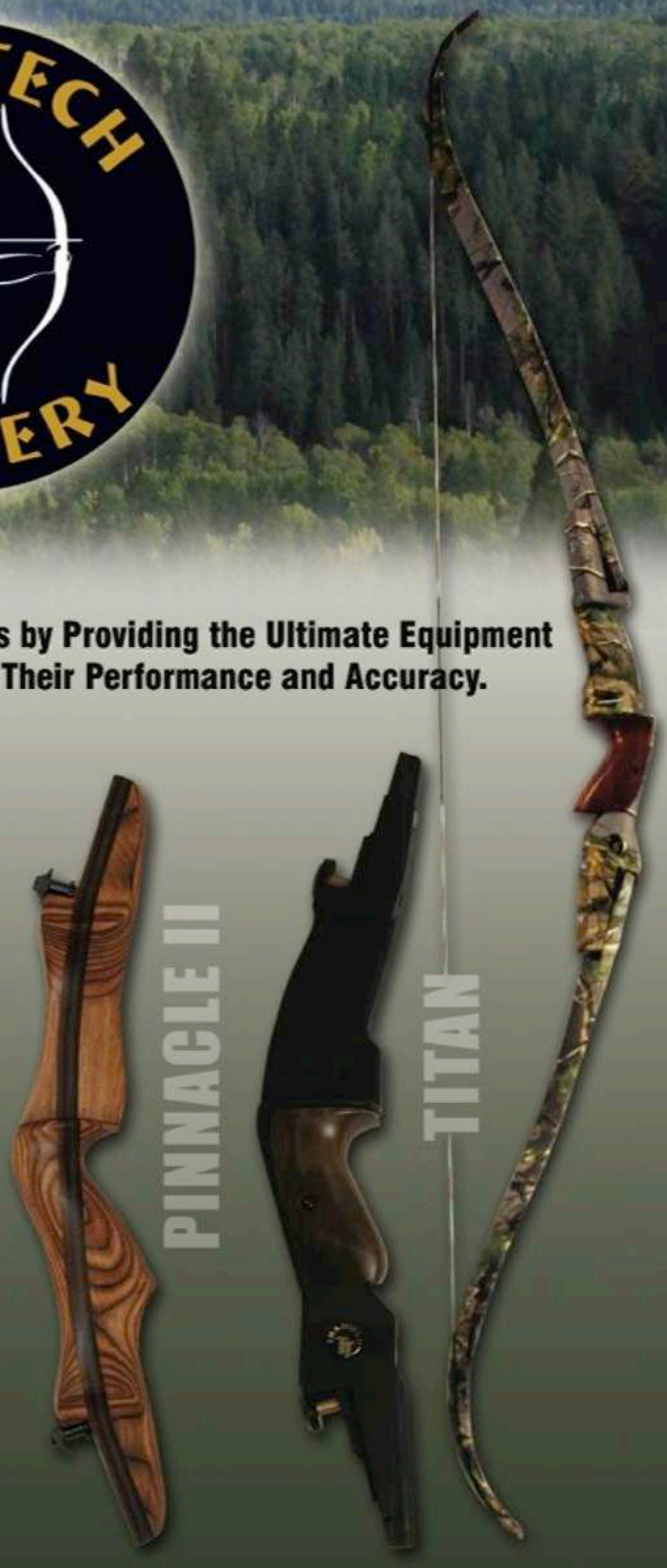

Avoiding Easier ...

By G. Fred Asbell

We hunted hard all week and weren't really seeing much worthwhile and we'd decided to pack up. I had my stuff loaded when Bob came in with one of our trail cameras with a nighttime picture of a beautiful buck. Probably a 140, which is a real monster back there. I can tell you, we shut off the motor, unpacked our bags, and started resetting stands. Nothing gets a bunch of bowhunters inspired like a big buck. That's a hell of a deer in Pennsylvania and no one had ever seen him around there."

"Did you get him?" someone asked.

"Naw … we ran out of time. If we could have stayed on into the rut, I think we could have gotten him … he was starting to move around earlier and earlier and we were getting pictures of him a couple of hours earlier …"

I was at a luncheon meeting with a bunch of bowhunters from across the country listening to this conversation thinking that it didn't sound quite right to me, but I just listened knowing that lots of bowhunters use trail cameras all the time. But I've thought about it quite a lot since, and the same thought keeps running through my mind.

When I was involved with Pope and Young Club, I remember there was a lot of conversation and interest in recognizing animals (whitetails mostly) taken behind high deer-proof fences. The proponents pointed out that a high fence didn't make shooting a deer a slam dunk, usually relating an oft-heard story about whitetails contained in a one mile fenced-in square, and how a hand-picked bunch of hunters beat the bushes hard for several days and never shot or saw a one. I don't remember the exact details of the story, but it was always told as the results of an official study done by (I think) the Texas Fish and Game. And having bowhunted whitetail deer for a lot of years, it was not a hard story for me to believe. Whitetails can sometimes exhibit supernatural powers of invisibility. And this story was told

There aren't any "easier" distractions available to the traditional bowhunter when he's wading rivers and climbing mountains after north country caribou ... and maybe that's one of the reasons it's so exhilarating.

to reinforce their contention that the high fencing didn't make it easier to kill a whitetail deer. Pope and Young maintained the position that regardless whether you could easily find the deer, you KNEW they were there, and if you hunted/waited long enough, something would walk in front of you, which is something you do not know with totally free roaming animals. When the deer are behind a high fence you know the animals are there inside that fence, and that's a huge advantage, which Pope and Young Club considered unfair. And the trail camera sort of brought the same thing to mind for me … you've used electronics to find the animal and you know its specific location, and in the case of the trail camera you even know a specific time, and you didn't know that without the electronic camera.

It seems to me that electronics and bowhunting are a tenuous pairing, and the matchup is worrisome to me. An interesting point in that same vein is, as the Pope and Young Club stated on several occasions, their ruling disallowing the use of electronic sights was intended as a deterrent to electronics in bowhunting, and not the specific sight itself. And, of course the point is made that electronics on the bow become a part of the shot and the kill, and the electronic camera is off in the woods far away and takes no part in the actual shot itself, and they are not the same, and that is true. Am I saying that I disapprove of the use of trail cameras? That's not my point, at all. The point I want to make, the thing I want to talk about, is how easily the "easier" concept slides into our bowhunting and how very different traditional bowhunting can become almost without our realizing that it has happened.

For a long time now I've felt that in many ways Will Compton, Art Young, Saxton Pope, Fred Bear, Glenn St. Charles ... all those fellas, our mentors ... had it easier than you and I do when it came to their direction: their bowhunting ethics, their personal morals, their equipment, the temptations they faced. They didn't have nearly as many distractions as you and I have facing us. There were no compound bows, no trail cameras, no GPS, no ATVs, no electronic detection gear to consider in their day. Treestands, hand-held entertainment devices, lighted nocks, scent-eliminating gear, plastic decoys, food plots, and piles of bait weren't around.

The compound bow was a natural move for some because everyone thought it would make them a better shooter, although I was never tempted, and instead shot my recurve continuously, craving perfection. But I hung thread across trails and put sand in them to tell me of an animal's passage, and I had mosquito bites on top of mosquito bites from lying in the weeds glassing the edges of Indiana bean fields scouting for deer in July and August. A poor sense of direction had me absorbing every book written on orienteering, besides carrying two or three compasses and a map when I could get it. I stood on tree limbs where deer never looked, and I took chlorophyll, used baking soda, wore rubber boots and rubber gloves, walked to my stand in the dark wearing only my underwear to keep from sweating, and played the wind religiously to go undetected. I knew the location of every oak, apple, and persimmon tree in my hunting area … although actually placing bait to attract animals

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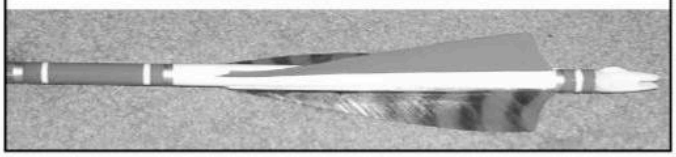

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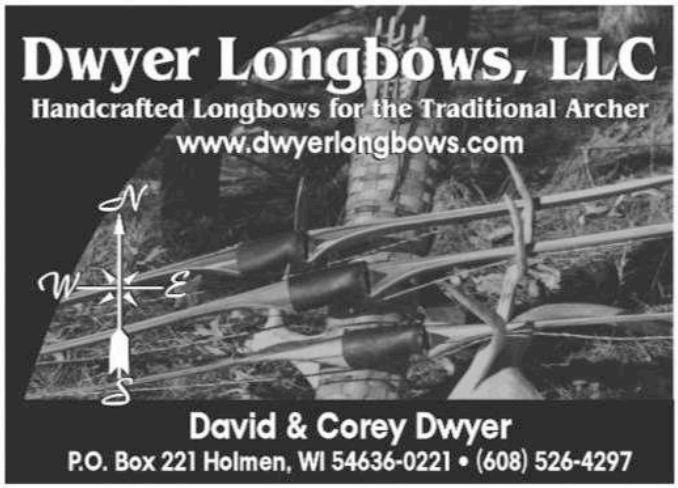

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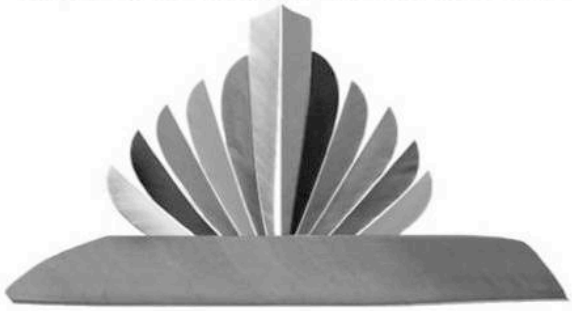

5" Shield - Full Length - 3", 4", 5" Round Back

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was illegal. And all that seemed the natural way to be a successful bowhunter a few years ago. But the world, and specifically our bowhunting world, has changed. Today there are so many opportunities to wander off course. Just about every segment of traditional bowhunting has some type of "make it easier, make you more successful" sort of thing available. Most of the things I learned/did as part of becoming/being a traditional bowhunter are now replaceable with some gewgaw. And unfortunately they become standard fare, fully "accepted," and just slide into the blind beside us without our consciously realizing what's going on. Is that wrong? Not specifically. We all come at this thing in different ways.

None of the things I've mentioned are bad, but they are each a departure from what I consider the traditional mentality, and use of each of them can be avoided with a little more personal commitment, and, yes, probably a little more ambition on our parts. Easier, can be spelled L.A.Z.Y. a lot of the time.

It's an insidious thing, in that these things creep into our bowhunting without our consciously making a decision to change how we go about it. And it's accumulative … one's not a concern, two seem okay, with three of them, things are not the same, etc. It seems that one item leads to another. Put it to yourself in this manner:

Is using a treestand wrong? No.

Is using a GPS wrong? No.

Is riding an ATV wrong? No.

Is using a trail camera wrong? Probably not.

How about six trail cameras?

How about lighted nocks? They're illegal in some states.

Can I wear Scent-Lok clothing? Sure

How about baiting animals (assuming it's legal)? Other than bears? Your decision.

Is using a life-size decoy okay? Your decision.

Is planting food plots okay? Sure

What about hanging a stand on the food plot? Your decision.

How about a "cellsomething" to watch movies and take calls on as you hunt? I had a note from a bowhunter telling me about sitting in a treestand on an elk wallow, watching "Jeremiah Johnson" on his cellthing, when his son called him to tell him he was moving to another stand, and the gizmo showed where he was going.

How about a father calling his son to alert him that he just passed up a deer that is now heading his way, and to get ready? That's clearly using electronics to assist/guide the hunter to the animal, which Pope & Young and Compton consider unfair. The father, who would never knowingly stretch or break any rule, was embarrassed, and probably a little angry with me when I commented. He simply hadn't thought about it like that. Cell phones are no different from walkie-talkies in that instance. This stuff slips in on you because its use is so much a part of our daily lives.

Considered individually, most all of these items are acceptable … some marginally, but acceptable … but collectively, when you put them all together, all of these "advantages," all these things that make bowhunting easier and definitely more successful, well, you get a different picture. What do we have when we view them collectively? We have

a not so traditional bowhunter being dragged back into the modern side of bowhunting when he goes to the woods.

In my mind, really being a traditional bowhunter should amount to more than just shooting a traditional bow. And I'm not leveling criticism at you, or anyone else specifically … I get caught up in the same stuff as you do. We're having a conversation about getting lost in all this razzmatazz that's invading our woods. They slip in on us without telling us they're coming. Modern culture has made a concerted effort to push aside the skills and knowledge taught in the woods, "woodsmanship" as Don Thomas recently wrote, and to level the playing field so all can easily be successful if they spend a few bucks … and be another Fred Bear if they spend a lot more. We're not just participants anymore — we are "participant consumers" now… constantly being manipulated for financial gain via the bigger/better/quicker banner. How very sad for us, but it's the same old story that's been at mankind's heels since the beginning. In my mind it's important that we resist all possible. We're traditional bowhunters, and I see part of what we do as holding onto the basic traditions of hunting with the bow and arrow. It seems to me we traditionalists have the responsibility of preserving bowhunting as a grass-roots bond between hunter, animal and the land. It seems a pretty important task to me.

Remember that we're a distinct part of the natural world. Each new distraction (gewgaw) we put between the animal and us is a wall between the hunting experience and us. Call them gadgets, call them necessities, they do the same thing — they insulate you from the experience; they create dependency and dilute accomplishment. You and I need to be alert to that very thing. It's worse than a thief in the night because so often it seems at the time like the thing to do. The world's most quoted, most recognized conservationist and environmentalist, Aldo Leopold, who was a bowhunter himself, made reference to what he called the "contrast value" of hunting, saying basically that the value of hunting exists in its contrast to our daily lives. In other words, hunting needs to be different from our daily lives. Leopold also wrote that our tools for the hunt were improving faster than we were, and that excessive mechanization destroys all contrast values. It doesn't take a genius to see the similarities between what's happening in our "work-a-day world" and in our hunting. One of the tests of our society, and certainly one of the tests of traditional bowhunting, is what we are willing to say "NO" to.

What's a fella to do? RESIST! RESIST EASIER!!

I find "easier" an interesting concept. Once you give in to it, it's very difficult to go back to "harder." Once a fella gets accustomed to riding an ATV to his treestand, it's harder to go back to walking than it originally was. And once a GPS begins directing my movements, it's difficult to go back to relying on my own abilities. And once you begin believing that you can't bowhunt without all that scent elimination gear you'll probably find it difficult to begin playing the wind again. Trail cameras and GPS units are major expenditures and neither is even close to necessary, but once purchased are probably hard to put back in the box.

Think about this for a moment. You were born a predator with hunting and predatory instincts and abilities similar to the animals … they're just covered up by fat-cat living. When you start paying attention to some of these things, when you begin stretching yourself and realize that you don't need to replace the hunter instincts you already possess, and begin using the skills and the awarenesses that are inside you, you are not only going to find yourself being more successful, but also enjoying your hunting so much more. You probably have a lot more ability than you imagine, but you have to get down off your consumer platform and begin working on being a hunter-man. I have continuous conversation with myself about that very thing. It's so easy to buy something else to make it easier. I'd encourage you to get involved with being a better bowhunter by pushing yourself and learning more and resurrecting deeper skills.

Very few people enjoy being told they are doing wrong, and that definitely includes us traditional bowhunters. I am not telling you that we are doing it wrong by using the various skill substitutes when we are bowhunting. But I am saying that you and I need to think about some of these things a bit more before buying into their usage. I don't think we need most of them.

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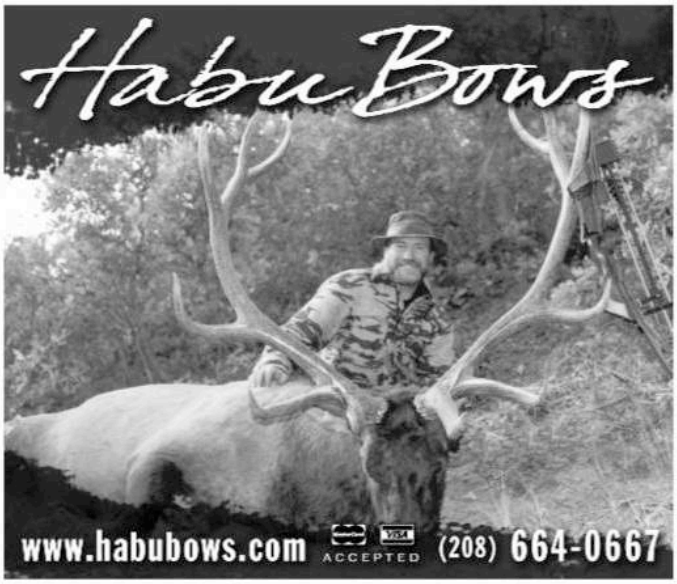


Traditional Bow Review:

Hawk T/D Recurve
Sky Archery

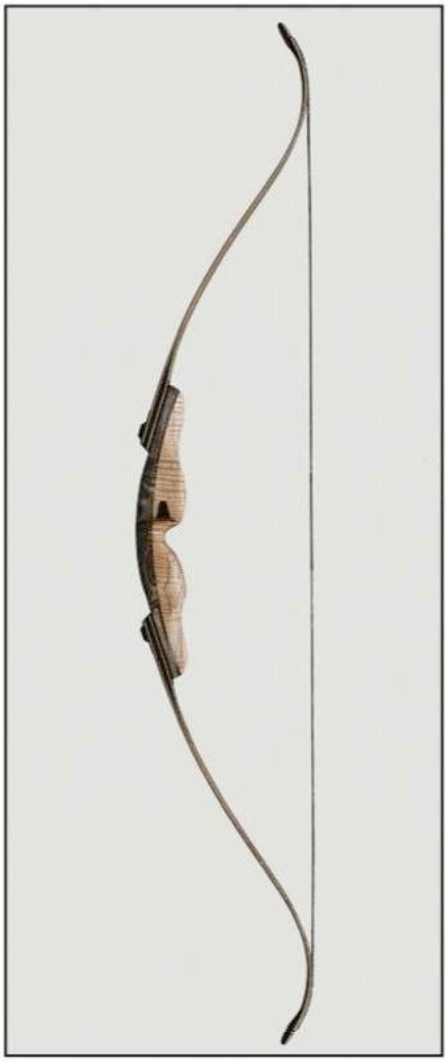
By R. Blacky Schwarz

Reviewed Bow

Model: Hawk T/D recurve bow, 58", 45 lbs @ 28"

Manufacturer

SKY Archery
2155 Pless Drive, Suite B
Brighton, Michigan 48114
www.skyarchery.com
Price: $ 680.00 (bow as pictured)



The Hawk Take-Down recurve is a brand new model in the SKY Archery line and shows design influences from Earl Hoyt Jr. and from Jim Belcher, who recently acquired SKY Archery from Mathews Inc. Jim not only bought the name; he also bought all the tools and presses Hoyt used in his shop in Missouri. After designing and marketing a short 17" metal ILF riser and equipping it with ILF limbs that he made on Earl's presses, Jim also started merging the old "wooden" SKY bows with his existing line of Belcher bows. He wants to combine the best design features of both lines in the bows of the new SKY line-up. The Hawk T/D recurve is one of those new bows and shows design features in the riser that Jim developed during his many years as a bowyer. The Hawk's recurve limbs are based on Hoyt's design and made on the original presses, since many people consider those to be the pinnacle of limb design. It's nice to see the SKY name back in business and it will be interesting to see what other bows will arise from the merger.

Riser

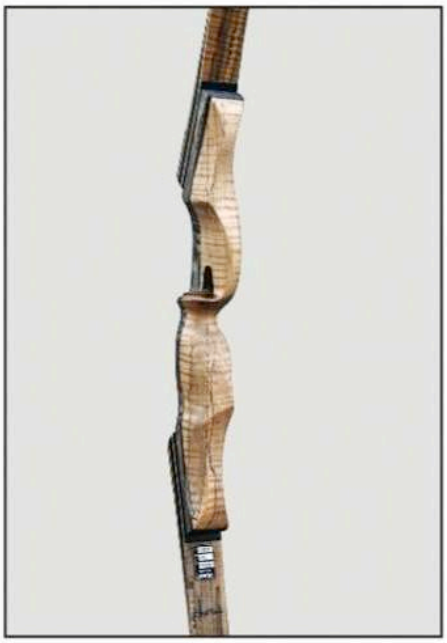
Length: The riser measures 16 inches from end to end.

Material: The slightly curved riser is glued up from two strips of gray maple actionwood on the back side of the bow and a piece of spalded curly maple on the grip side. The actionwood strips, dyed in different shades of gray, black, and brown, are accented with a very thin center layer of maple. The curly maple, also called tiger maple, in the grip section of the riser shows off the typical stripe pattern in several hues of light brown and beige. A few thin, black grain lines running from top to bottom within the maple piece make for an interesting optical appearance. Radiusing of the arrow shelf and enabling the arrow to ride low above the bow hand enhances hand-eye coordination. A strip of black glass on the front side of the riser is the base for the contrasting riser overlay, laminated from several layers of the materials used in the riser.

Shape: deflexed.

Grip: medium high pistol type grip.

Center Cut: The SKY Hawk riser is cut to center.



Sight Window: The sight window measures 3-3/8 inches in height.

Distance from Pivot Point to shelf: 3/4 of an inch (from deepest part of grip to shelf surface).

Physical weight: 14.2 oz (riser with limb bolts attached).

Take-Down System: A black aluminum shoulder bushing and a black steel limb bolt are used to mount the limbs to the riser. The rim of the bushing protrudes from the belly side of the limb butt and fits exactly into the mounting hole in the riser, which is equipped with the glued-in limb bolt bushing. Positive limb alignment is achieved with the limb bolt bushing and a steel pin in the riser that fits in an oblong shaped hole in the limb butt.

Finish: A catalyzed varnish is sprayed onto the limbs and riser to protect the bow from the elements. The varnish dries to a flat, non-reflective finish that makes it suitable for hunting.

Limbs

Bow Length: 58 inches.

Draw Weight: 45 lbs @ 28 inches (A.T.A.).

Brace Height: The recommended brace height for the 58" bow length ranges from 7-1/2 to 8 inches.

Shape: Recurved limbs with a rectangular cross-section.

Material: The unusual looking grain pattern of the two spalded curly maple center laminations show through the two outer layers of clear Bo-Tuff fiberglass. The maple pattern's long streaks in different shades of brown are bordered with dark, almost black, zigzag shaped pin stripes running along the length of the limbs. Those streaks are embedded in the typical curly maple pattern with lots of wide and lighter colored grain lines running across the limbs. The limb wedges and the reinforcement overlays on the back and belly side of the limb butts are cut and ground from black micarta. The limb tip overlays are also made from black micarta and are highlighted with thin layers of spalded curly maple.

Limb width: The limbs measure 1-17/32 inches at the fade-outs and taper down to 25/32 of an inch just below the string groove.

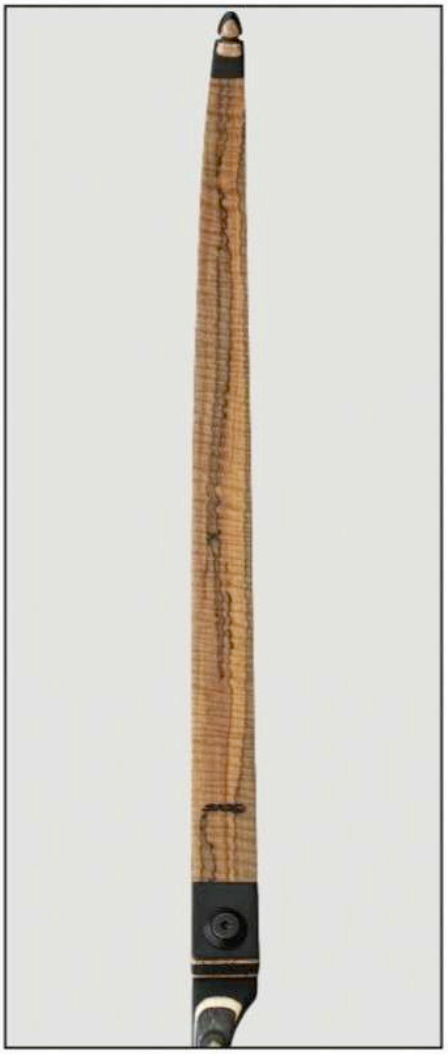
String: A Flemish twist string made from 14 strands of Brownell's new Astro Flight string material is supplied with the Hawk recurve bow. Other high performance string materials can be used without any ill effect.

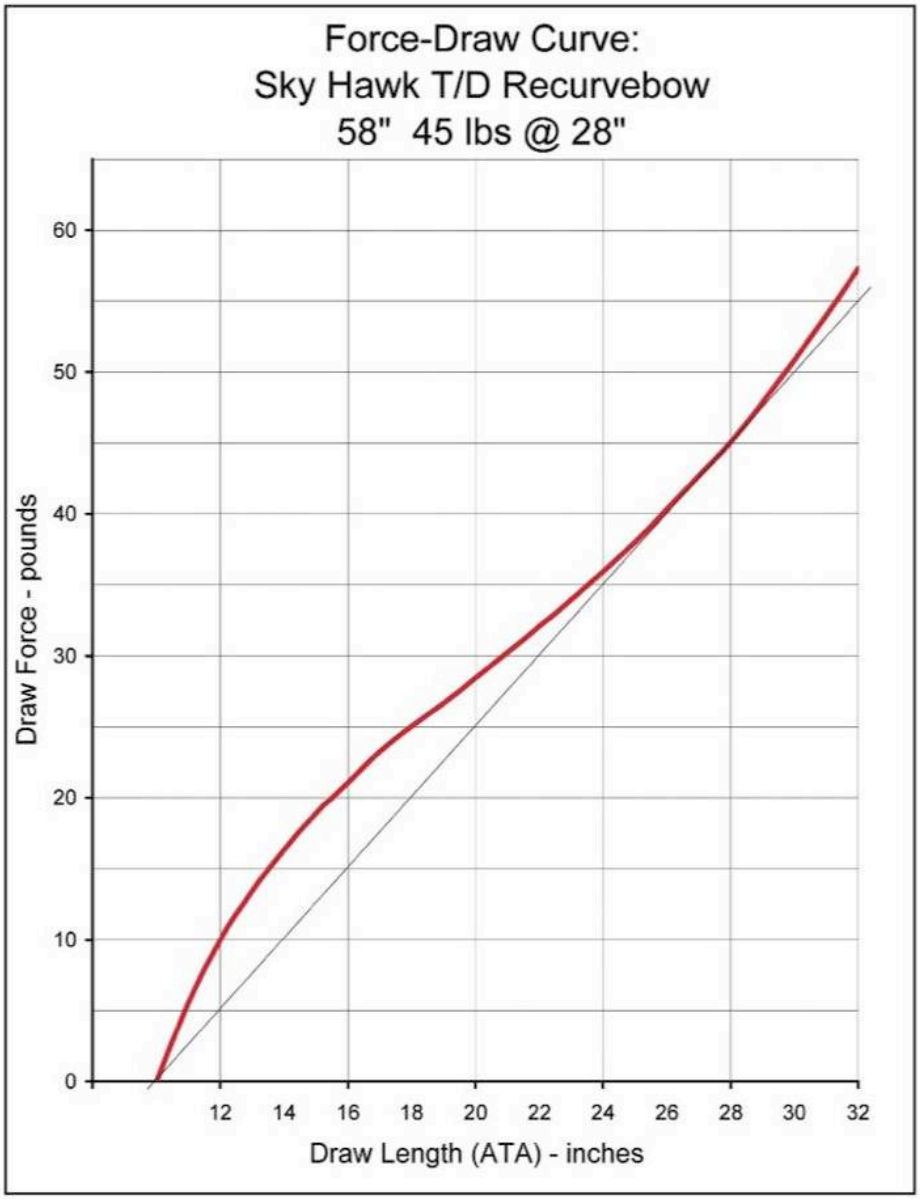
Physical weight: 14.3 oz (limbs with string attached)

Finish: same as riser.

Ordering Options

SKY's Hawk three-piece T/D recurve bow is available in R.H. and L.H. models. The bow can be ordered in lengths of 58", 60" and 62" with draw weights ranging from 25 to 70 lbs. The SKY Hawk base model sports maple actionwood in the limbs and the riser and





retails for $650. The customer can upgrade with several exotic woods for the riser and bamboo, veneers and carbon for the limbs. Other options are available upon request.

Testing Parameters

A force-draw curve was obtained from the reviewed bow using a digital force gauge with a resolution of 0.1 lbs. Measured bow weight was rounded to the next half pound. The different arrow speeds were achieved with the bow shot from a shooting machine with a mechanical release and with finger release, using a "Crick-It" clicker and a deerskin glove. The string was pulled to 28 inches A.T.A. (26 1/4 inches from the string to the deepest point of the grip). The (3) arrows for the speed testing had a weight of 9 grains per pound of measured (not stated) draw weight. A modified 16-strand Flemish spliced Fast-Flight string with heavily padded loops and without any attachments (silencers, etc.) was used. Speed measurements were taken 3 feet in front of the back of the bow with two chronographs set up in a tandem configuration. Each arrow was shot a minimum of three times and the average achieved speed was rounded to the next whole digit.

Test Results

Draw weight: 45 lbs @ 28".

Stored energy: 38.69 ft-lbs.

Stored energy per pound of draw weight: 0.86 ft-lbs/lbs.

Arrow weight: 405 grains.

Arrow speed: 190 fps with mechanical release.

Kinetic energy: 32.47 ft-lbs.

Efficiency: 83.9 % (Kinetic energy / stored energy).

Arrow Speed: 185 fps with finger release.

R. "Blacky" Schwarz is a self-employed consultant and freelance writer who lives close to Heidelberg, Germany with his wife Danny. They both share a passion for the outdoors and especially Bowhunting, which is not legal in Germany. Danny and Blacky bowhunt mostly in the U.S., where they belong to numerous bowhunting organizations including PBS and Compton Traditional Bowhunters. Blacky writes bow reviews and other articles for different archery and bowhunting magazines in the USA, Europe and Africa. He can be reached at: blacky@BowReports.com.

The Life of Riley

By Mark Baker

The boy never really had a chance … seriously! From birth, Riley Saxton Fisher was destined to become a bowhunter. First born of my hunting partner, Fish Fisher, his middle name was chosen to reflect and guide his way. His dad would read him bedtime stories from the pages of **Traditional Bowhunter Magazine** and from his own hunting journals, and then tuck him in while he went to sleep listening to "The Sultans of Fling" CD on his radio each night. Desire develops in the sleeping mind.

Gerald "Fish" Fisher has been my hunting partner and like a brother to me for two decades now, sharing our passion for bowhunting as we raised our kids to hold the same values. He has been there to see both my boys grow into the young men and bowhunters they are today, taking an active role as a hunting partner and mentor alongside me. He was there for both of my boys' "firsts" with their bows and has shared in many others since. So it has been one of my great joys to be there when young Riley took his own "first" big game.

I say big game, because Riley has been at this a long time and was already a seasoned veteran small game and varmint hunter. He has traipsed the woods with his dad and me as long as he could walk and has been shooting bows as long as he could figure out which hand to let go with at full draw. I fondly remember a session of gopher hunting with Riley when he was around five years old.

Fish and Riley had been practicing all summer. Their practice sessions always started with them tossing their arrows about the yard and then taking the shot at the target from wherever the arrows landed. Riley learned how to practice the right way, for sure.

One afternoon after scouting stand locations, Fish, Riley, and I were headed back home in the truck when we spotted a couple of gophers out in a field. Riley was intent on taking one of the rascals; after all, he'd been practicing. When Fish stopped the truck, we silently exited and readied our gear, then slowly stepped out into the field with Riley in the lead. As he stalked into his comfortable range, he stopped and motioned for us to do so as well. We let Riley shoot first, as this was his big moment.

Riley quietly reached into his back quiver, grabbed his whole batch of arrows, and began throwing them around the field while the gophers looked on and I just about busted a gut laughing. I'll never forget it, and the look on Fish's face was priceless as well. Riley became quite the shot over the next several years, and spent many days in hunting camp with us. Finally at the age of 12, Riley came into his own

as a bowhunter, passing on several big game opportunities that "didn't feel right" to him. He had learned self-discipline well. That season he made several hunts, but never quite put together any success of his own. His time was soon to come, however.

The next fall, after another summer spent decimating the local gopher population, young Riley was about as ready as a youngster can be. He was carrying a new recurve, a bow that really fit him well. He had always been a good shot, but by this time I think he was clearly the best shot in our whole group. At least it seemed so on targets, but he would soon have his chance to prove it on game as well.

The first weekend of the Montana bow season almost always falls on Labor Day weekend, and so Riley had an extra day to hunt without having to miss any school. He made good on the opportunity with a perfectly placed arrow on a velvet antlered whitetail buck during the warm weather opener. He had finally broken the ice, and we all knew more was still to come.

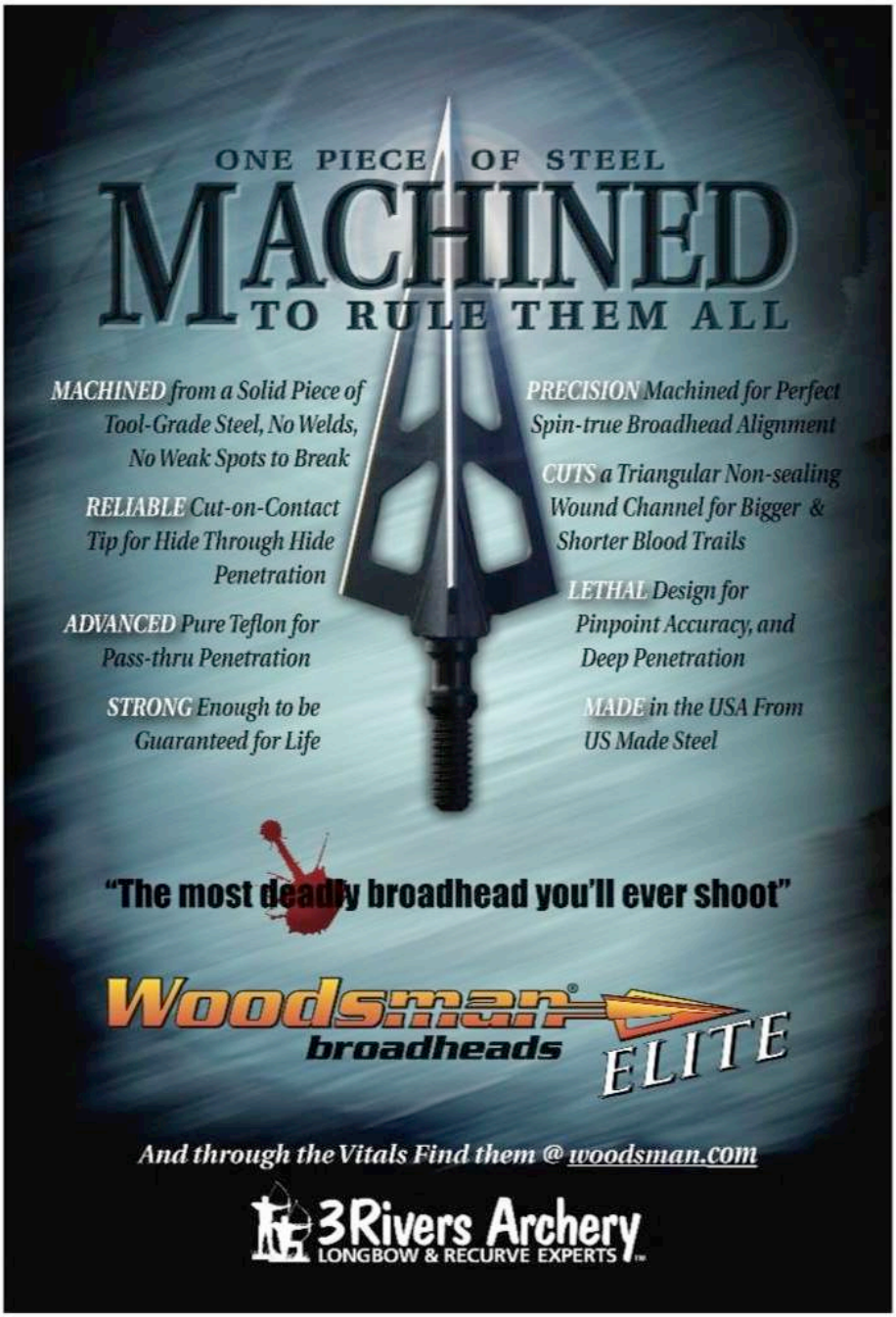
Now it was another season, and Riley, now 14 years old, had yet to connect on an elk. Indeed, it was proving to be a tough year for all of us wapiti veterans. Several of us had filled doe tags by that point, but the elk kept eluding us.

It was nearing the end of the archery-only season in Montana, and we would soon be done hunting elk in this particular unit, which requires a special permit for the general season. Riley had drawn a coveted either-sex permit that would let him hunt with his bow during the general rifle season, so he still had some time. I had been concentrating my efforts on deer with a chance at an elk along one of the upper hayfields on the ranch we are privileged to hunt, and had spotted a great buck there.

I made the two-hour drive from my home to the ranch early enough to get set in my stand for the evening hunt, knowing that Fish and Riley wouldn't arrive until later because of school and the long drive. We all wanted elk options, so that particular area was to be "the spot," at least for the first evening.

As planned, I watched from my vantage as Fish and Riley drove to the parking area across a large grain field, changed clothes, and separated as they headed off toward their respective stands. Riley went north, to the corner of the property where his favorite stand hung, while Fish headed straight toward me. Actually, he was heading for a stand he had previously hung but never sat. I had seen the aforementioned big buck from that stand and fine-tuned the setup with a stand of my own only 50 yards away to the north. Fish knew about this but was unaware of my location. I watched him climb into his stand, get settled in, and then begin to take stock of the area. After a wave on my part, he quickly spied my lurking form in the aspen trees and waved back. We had passed some time goofing off like kids when a noise behind me alerted me to approaching deer. I turned and spotted a young buck nearby, feeding unconcerned. After confirming that he wasn't a shooter, I relaxed again.

Suddenly a thunderous galloping sound rose from the north, and Fish, who was able to see from his position, indicated to me through more serious



gestures that a bull elk had just entered the woods behind my stand. The feeding deer seemed very nervous about the presence of the elk, which was thrashing and breaking brush. The deer made a hasty retreat back toward the swamp, and I began to think that there was more than one elk in the woods behind me.

My suspicions changed however when I began to hear labored breathing and even more crashing. I gestured to Fish, who was looking intently through his binoculars, that I thought young Riley might have shot this bull. Fish, unable to hear the slowing pace of the bull's breathing, couldn't quite put it all together. With light failing quickly, we both eased down from our stands and I told him my conclusions. Then we made a quick plan to split up and still-hunt in toward the elk.

With a good idea where it was, I stumbled onto the now dead bull easily, although he was well hidden in the chest-high grass and fallen aspens. I let out a low whistle, and Fish hopped his way through 50 yards of the thick stuff, still acting somewhat bewildered. "Your boy just shot this bull!" I exclaimed, as a look of realization finally appeared on his face. With smiles and backslaps, we scratched our heads and guffawed a few minutes before hatching plan.

The evening grew dark quickly, with no visible moon. We watched as Riley made his way toward us in the dark with his flashlight indicating his progress. Finally he arrived and began telling us his story … with some guarded optimism.

"I watched as this bull made his way all the way across the field to me," he began. "Then he hopped the fence and walked right in to get a drink, and as he passed I just shot him. The arrow looked good, and then he ran crashing through the trees. I couldn't find my arrow and I lost sight of him … "

"Did you see the arrow hit?" I asked, trying to suppress a grin. "Where'd you hit him? Which way did he run? Are you sure?"

"Well Uncle Howie here … " Fish began (he has called me that as long as we've known each other) " … just shot a doe, and we know about where she is, so maybe we should give your elk some time and take care of Howie's doe first. Let's go find her."

And so we set off to "trail" my imaginary doe, which really was just a ploy to get Riley to search in the general area where his bull had died. Starting at the stand, with Fish on one side, me on the other, and young Riley between us, we continued with our ruse, knowing that the boy would soon stumble on his dead bull.

As he soon did … "There's my bull!" he exclaimed, as we answered, "No way!" Then more backslapping erupted, celebrating a moment a father, his son, and "Uncle Howie" will never forget … ever.

I wrote a song called "Feathers Thru the Wind", telling how we pass on traditional bowhunting to our youngsters, from one generation to the next. That's a wish all of us proud fathers who are smitten with the flight of the arrow hope to share with our own kids. And it came true for Fish, just as it did for me with my own sons. We are so fortunate, in that no matter where life takes the boys on their own journeys, we will always remember such shared moments. They transcend the constraints of time, and will always bring us together no matter what other differences develop among us. That's the magic of bowhunting.

Livingston, Montana bowhunter Mark Baker previously wrote an article for the magazine ("The Fabulous Baker Boys") that chronicled a hunt with his own young sons. For more info about the author and his music CD's, visit his website www.classicbowhunting.com.

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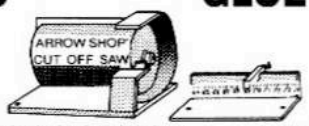

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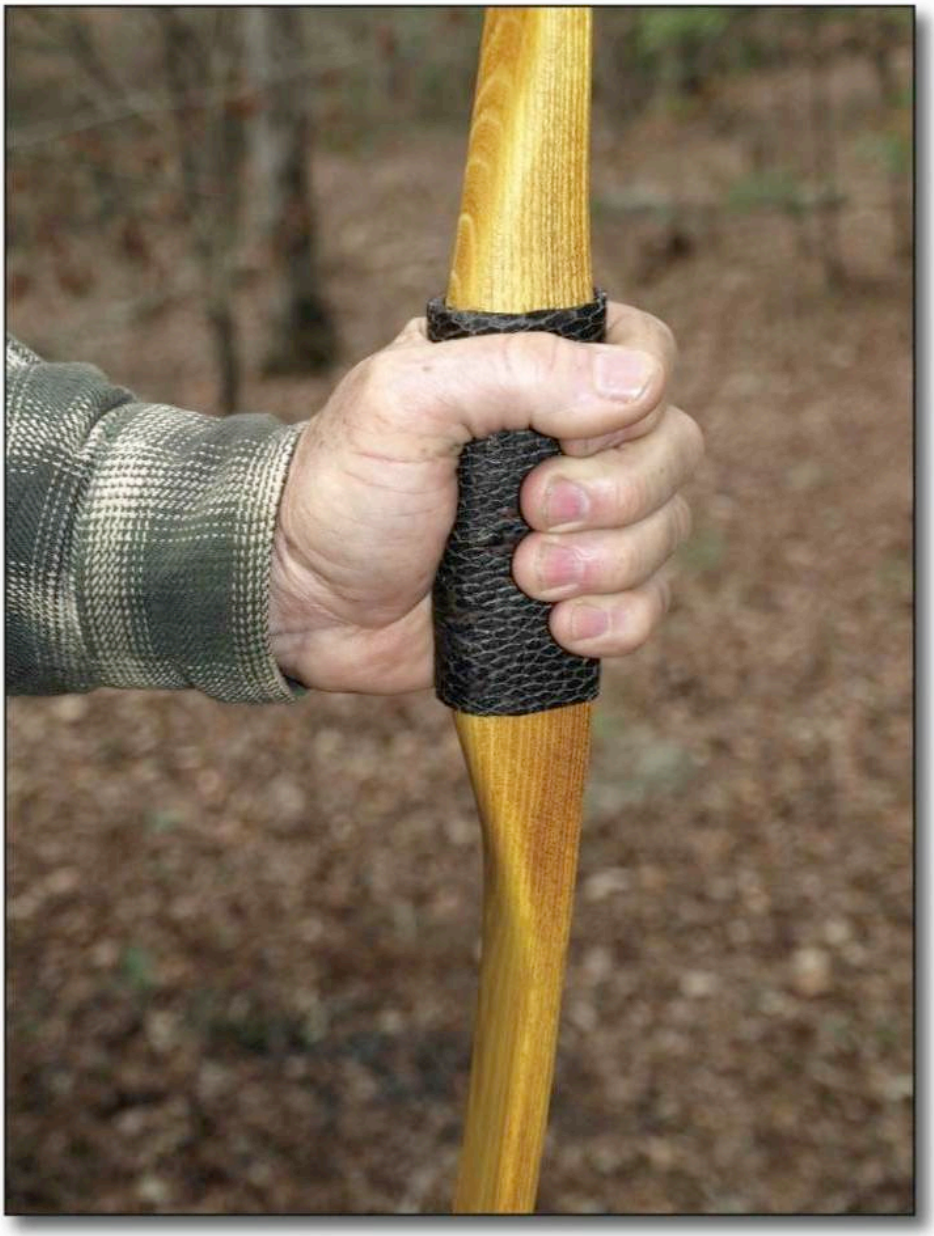

The Beaver Tail Bow Handle

By Krista Holbrook

When I saw the beaver tail bow handle wrap that my friend John Schultz had ordered from Pine Hollow Archery Supply, I felt pea green with envy. It looked like it would make an excellent grip: textured to prevent slipping, tough and water proof, truly a superior hide.

In the past, I had always preferred brain tanned deerskin, which I collected and tanned myself. While brain tan is definitely a superb natural product, I decided to diversify and try beaver tail. I related my desire to several friends, who said they would be on the lookout for a beaver, and save one for me at the next opportunity. It wasn't long before my friend Steve called to say he had a beaver in the freezer and was waiting for me to come pick it up.

I find beaver a tasty addition to my dinner table, so after skinning it out, I remove the hams, brown them in oil, parboil until slightly tender, and put them in the oven to bake slowly with onions and potatoes while I work on the tail. Any pot roast recipe works well with beaver.

All beavers have two sets of scent glands: anal glands and castor glands. They also have a cloaca, through which urine, fecal matter, and scent empties. The castor glands secrete a musk, which the beaver utilizes as a territorial marker scent. Both sets of glands are located under the skin near the base of the tail. One should avoid cutting into these glands during cleaning, and remove that area if they intend to cook the beaver. By cutting the tail off just on the hairline, then trimming several inches around the cloaca, these glands are easily avoided. They make superior bait for trapping predators, or other beaver.

The tail itself is tough but somewhat delicate when fresh, much like any high quality leather. The basic idea is to simply fillet the tail like a fish. You need a large enough tail to get one handle cover out of each side. Begin by inserting a sharp knife under the edge of the skin at the very base of the tail along one edge. Cut through the skin starting where it was severed at the base, up along one side, over the top and entirely around to the other side of the base of the tail. Then begin working the sharp knife under the edge of the skin, separating it from the fat and tendon that form the structure of the tail. Once again, it is just like filleting a fish. Be careful not to cut through the skin. Continue working under the skin, peeling it away until you reach the opposite

Removing the tail from a fresh beaver hide.

side and completely separating it from the tail.

Now carefully begin to remove excess fat from the skin. Once you have cut off as much as possible, you can use the edge of the knife to scrape away a bit more, working to remove fat and achieve a uniform thickness. The inside of the skin will be white, the outside nearly black. You want to remove enough of the inner membrane so the piece is clean and flexible, like a piece of fairly thick leather. It will remain white inside while wet. Once you have finished the cleaning you can give it a quick wash with dish soap before rinsing it thoroughly.

Now that you are familiar with the steps, repeat the skinning and cleaning process on the other side of the tail. You now have two potential bow handles. If simply left to dry, it will curl up and be difficult to cut for a pattern, so you need to keep it flat while drying. One way to do this is to nail it to a piece of plywood with small finishing nails or thumb tacks along each edge, then leave it to dry thoroughly. Once secure, it may take a day or two or longer to dry depending on the climate. Once dry, the white membrane becomes opaque, and the tail will feel stiff and hard. The half you have flattened for drying can be stored for spare handle material. You can pre-cut it for a pattern in advance and just dry the usable piece, or you

Filet the tail like you would a fish.

Here are both sides of the tail, one fleshed out on the left.

may choose to dry the entire half. Like all hide and feathers, it is susceptible to insect damage so store it appropriately.

If you are going to sew on one handle wrap now, you can lay the newly washed half on a dry cloth to reduce moisture content while you make a pat-

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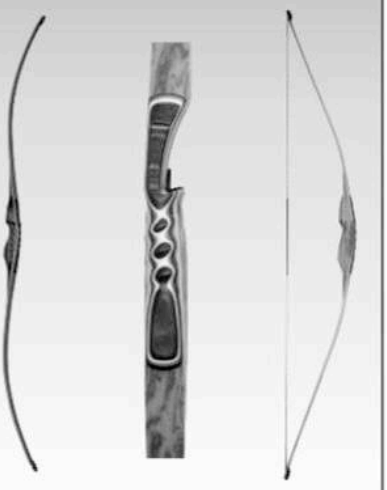

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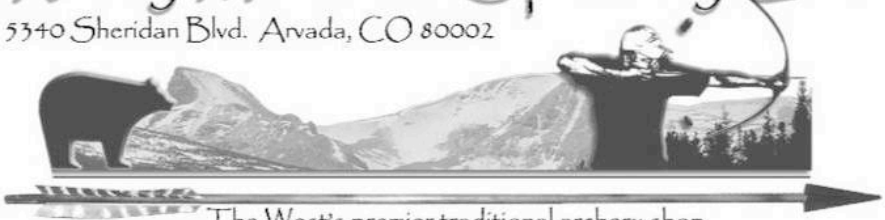

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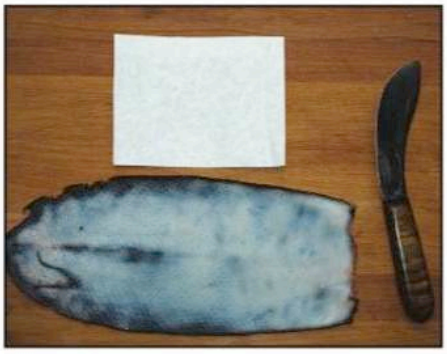
Checking the fit of the paper template.

tern for the handle grip. I do this by simply wrapping a piece of paper around the grip and holding it in place with my hand as if I were going to shoot the bow. I then take a pencil and draw a line denoting the top and bottom of the grip. Then with the paper overlapping on the back of the bow, I draw a line down the center of the back where the handle edges will meet and be sewn together. I like to have a thicker band of skin at the top of the handle as it offers a more positive grip and acts almost like a shelf in helping position my arrow against the bow. I add one-quarter inch above the top line on my pattern with the intention of folding the top edge of the skin under to create this thicker band.

Using the lines as a guide and adding for the fold, cut out the paper pattern and check the fit. You want a nearly perfect fit, with only a very tiny gap, if any, and not any overlap. The beaver tail hide will shrink slightly while drying. It may also stretch a fraction when you pull it tight while sewing it onto the bow. If it is too small and you pull it too tightly the stitches can tear out when it shrinks while drying, so try to make a close fitting pattern.

Place the paper pattern on top of the inside of the skin and trace with a marker. Now cut out the handle cover. I



Tail ready to be cut to pattern.

find it easiest to use a small ruler and a razor knife or Exacto. If it matches your pattern, it should fit nicely and you can prepare to sew it on to the bow.

Most of our self-bows have a fairly simple, straight handle. This makes for an easy relatively square pattern. However, the hide is flexible and will readily contour to a curved shape. In this situation, leave a little extra hide where the seam will run along the back of the handle. Fit the damp hide in place, squeeze the handle, and push, mash, and work it into place. Then trim off any excess at the seam with your razor knife once it is well conformed to the bow handle shape.

I like to sew using two leather needles. The triangular tip of leather sewing needles cuts easily through hide, so pre-punched holes are not necessary if you have a fair eye for symmetry. If using large regular needles, it is best to pre-punch holes with an awl or sharp ice pick. Mark the piece on the inside and punch holes 1/8th inch from the edge and 1/8th inch apart along the two edges making the seam, adjusting holes as necessary for them to come out even at the bottom of the handle.

Cut a piece of artificial sinew or similar heavy thread such as Dacron string material, a yard long. Thread one needle on each end with a few inches of thread passing through the eye. Make a pencil mark on the bow to align the top of the handle; this is where the arrow will rest. You may elect to glue on a thin piece of leather for a strike plate. If you want the strike plate to extend below the handle wrap, use contact cement and glue it on first, then position the handle wrap covering the bottom portion of the strike plate leather. Remember to fold over the top edge of

Tail cut out to pattern and ready to dry.

the grip if desired. An alternative to folding the top over to create a ridge, providing a more positive grip, is to glue a thick strip of different leather around the top of the finished handle. This is a good option if the tail is on the small side, or you may simply like the appearance of the contrast in color. Contact glue is a good choice for adding this strip, and you can also take one or two stitches to secure it in place.

Begin sewing the wrap by going through the top outside right edge of the handle and coming out one stitch below on the left side. With the other needle go through the top left outside and come out the right side one stitch below the first. Repeat this as you sew, always coming through from the outside and exiting from the inside of the opposite piece, and always starting from the right side. Snug up each stitch as you sew. Periodically check to see that the handle is staying in place, and adjust it as necessary. Once you reach the bottom, tie a knot, which can be hidden inside the wrap.

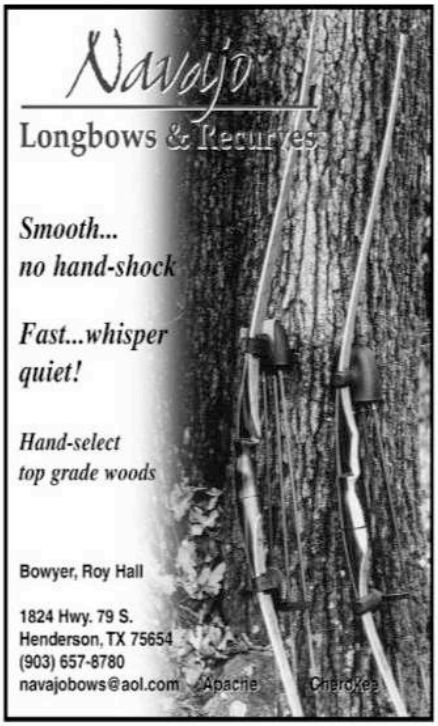
Grip the handle, check the fit, gently make any necessary adjustments and then put it away to dry in place undisturbed for a day or two. Admire the unique textured pattern of the hide. When ready to use the other half of the tail wrap, soak it in a pan of water to rehydrate the hide. Let it soak an hour or more until it is totally saturated and pliable.

If you had a whole beaver the roast should be ready by now. This is superb meat, more similar to beef than venison. As soon as I have the tail skinned out, I put the inner part of it in a separate pan and stick it in the oven to bake along with the roast. Though consisting almost entirely of fat and sinew, it has a delicate flavor. When brown and crisp it tastes far superior to commercial pork rinds, which are also simply cooked animal fat. In addition to edibility, any oil that cooks out can be used for future cooking or used as a rub-on finish for waterproofing your wooden bow.

Sewing on the handle.

If you do not have a beaver tail available, you can order a handle cover from Pine Hollow Archery Supply. This beaver tail handle wrap can make a very functional, eye-catching addition to any longbow, recurve, or primitive bow.

Krista Holbrook contributes frequently to our Primitive column. She and her husband Sterling have hunted all over North America with their homemade archery tackle. They currently live in rural Alabama.



Fred's Bear

By Duncan Pledger

Fred Bear seemed to have a problem with bears. On his Canadian moose trip (recounted in this column in the Feb/Mar 2007 issue) an opportunistic bruin was determined to make off with the pile of moose meat from the famous Grayling archer's successful hunt. Fred was equally determined to add the black bandit to the meat pole. But in spite of setting various ambushes, including spending most of one frigid night in the bottom of a canoe tethered to shore, when they broke camp the marauding bear had not been brought to bay.

The next season, Bear returned to the northland with a friend, Jim Henderson, and Ojibway guide John Negoneypinaee. Their camp was on Lake Wabaskang, in western Ontario about 150 miles north of International Falls where they hoped to find a moose for Jim.

"I had taken a moose in that same neighborhood a year earlier," Bear writes, "putting a good hefty bull down almost in his tracks with one arrow. It was a bear I wanted this time. Thieving black bears had pestered us all through our moose hunt the fall before and I had tried hard, but in vain, to put an arrow into one of them. I had come back now determined I would even the score."

The hunters and their guide reached their camp after an 80 mile trip up several lakes in a square stem canoe with a small motor. They spent the first day cutting firewood, putting their camp in order and doing some scouting for moose and bear sign. There was plenty of it around, and after lunch on Day Two, they set off to find a moose. It didn't take long. Their guide soon spotted one swimming across a bay, and they started their watery "stalk"—paddling when the moose dipped its head to feed in the shallows, and coasting when it rose up to look around. When they got close enough, Henderson drew on the animal.

"Jim cut loose at about 40 yards," Bear reported. "We heard the arrow hit with a good solid whock and the bull took off in a geyser of water and mud." The moose ran only a short distance and then turned to look back at the canoe. Jim loosed another shaft, which sliced the animal's ear as it trotted off into the brush. Darkness was approaching, so they decided to take up the search in the morning.

" 'Sick moose' " Johnny, the guide, assured them. ' "Get um tomorrow.' "

Johnny evidently knew his stuff, because the next morning they found the moose only a hundred yards from where it had turned into the brush. They spent the rest of the day bringing the meat back to camp. That's when the bear showed up and Bear's hunt began.

The next morning, he reported: "We had piled the moose meat on top of the rock in front of the tent and covered it with a tarp. Blackie ate part of a tenderloin and lugged off a section of ribs and the tarp, while we slept in the tent a dozen yards away." When they found the meat and the tarp where the bear had cached it in the brush a short distance behind the tent and had partially covered it with leaves, they took the bear's ill-gotten stash back to camp.

That evening they piled the meat on a rock, covered with the tarp and weighed down with more rocks. They then set an alarm in the form of an empty 20-gallon drum placed over it, which would fall over and make a racket as it bounced over the rocks if the cache were disturbed. At least that was the idea, but they were dealing with a pro.

"When we rolled out at daybreak we found the bear had paid us another imprudent visit and walked off undetected. He had reached under the tarp without tumbling the drum and carried away most of the moose except for the four quarters."

The following night the remaining meat was tied to a tree and rigged with an alarm made from bean cans. At that point Bear began to wonder about the

"Fred Bear and the dark scavenger. It didn't move far after a 4-bladed arrow hit it"

effectiveness of an arrow at close range.

"Maybe you're wondering whether 70-pound pull bows and four-bladed hunting arrows are proper medicine for a bear at 10-yard range in the pitch dark of a moonless night. Frankly, we were wondering the same thing. We knew our bows were adequate for bear under the right conditions. Plenty of other archers had proved that, and our own experience confirmed it. The equipment which handled moose, as ours had on two separate occasions, would fix a bear's go-cart all right, IF we could place our shots. But shooting at night is different, and if we whooped an arrow into a bear thirty feet away and failed to make it count, he might turn into a nasty customer."

After rigging the meat, they ate supper early. At dusk they let the fire in the tent stove go low, and crawled into their sleeping bags. The tent flap had been left slightly open so that they could shoot through it with both a bow, as well as Jim's camera. They lay motionless waiting for the faint, tell-tale sounds of a bear hitting the meat, but all they heard was the murmur of the river and an owl hooting in a tree behind camp. Then something disturbed the owl's serenade.

Even though the night was overcast, Bear could see fairly well when he peered out of the tent flap. He had no trouble making out a dark shape warily circling the stump where the meat had been secured. "He halted and I could see him swing his head from side to side, sniffing, trying to search out some vague scent from the tent or weighing the man smell which hung over the bait. I had an arrow on the string now. I was on one knee in an easy shooting position, and I lifted the bow and waited for him to move clear of the stump. He took a couple of cautious steps, stopped to sniff again and then, as if satisfied, turned broadside and put his head down to smell the bait.

"I'd never get a better chance. He stood, silhouetted against the pewter-colored water of the river, big and chunky and black, a dozen steps from where I knelt, as good a target as a man could hope for in the night. I brought the bowstring back until it touched the side of my jaw, aiming by instinct—and in that instant a spruce knot fell apart in the stove and blew a little puff of flame back through the draft hole."

The already-nervous bear wasn't sticking around to see what happened next. As it scrambled over the rock towards the safety of the woods, Fred let his arrow fly. He heard a dull thud when it hit, and at the same time Jim triggered the flash on his camera as he tried to catch the action on film. It lit up the whole camp enough for them to see the back end of the disappearing bruin.

Everyone agreed that the sodden sound of the arrow hitting most likely indicated a gut shot, but in spite of that, there was still a good possibility that it would be fatal. The next morning however, they found the arrow sticking out of a rotten stump.

The close call and the blinding flash of the camera evidently sobered their burglar up a bit, and even though he visited the camp the next two nights, he stayed away from the meat and the area around the tent. If they were going

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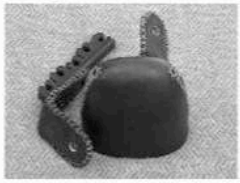
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"Is a big pike food for bait?" asked Jim.
"It makes bear sick," grinned the guide."

to get another shot, they'd have to change their tactics, and Bear decided that he'd use the canoe as a blind, as he had on his previous trip.

" ... I decided to move the bait down by the river, anchor the canoe out in the rushes a few yards away and lie in the bottom of it. We made everything ready and at dusk I spread my bag in the bottom of the canoe and crawled into it. It was a clear fall night, starlit and cold, with frost on the grass. Everything was quiet in the tent, a thin ribbon of smoke from the stovepipe the only hint of life."

Soon a bear sauntered toward the bait. It was smaller than the one that had been visiting them, but according to Fred, " ... still plenty big enough". It began tugging on the bait, but the lashings held it firmly to the tree. While this was going on, Fred squirmed out of his bag enough to kneel and get his bow up, but there wasn't enough room to come to full draw.

"The noise of the river spilling around the rock drowned out the sound of the striking arrow, save for a faint indistinct click unlike the sound of any arrow impact I'd ever heard. But the bear squealed like a hog caught for butchering, swiveled around and came down along the river bank. He went past within five feet of the canoe and I let out a deep breath of relief when he kept going."

They searched the area with a lantern. This time there was blood and they figured that they'd find the dead animal in the morning. Before daybreak though, the sound of rain drumming on the tent indicated that trailing it would be difficult. It turned out to be impossible. The rain had washed away all signs of the bear, except for the unbroken arrow with the faint signs of two or three inches of blood behind the head. They spent most of the day combing the dense spruce and alder swamp behind camp and found plenty of bear beds — a couple of them occupied — but no sign of the wounded bruin.

The weather was turning warm, and they decided that Jim and John, the guide, would travel all the way back to an outpost camp that had ice for the moose. "Don't play with the bears while you're alone," Jim kidded Fred as he fired up the outboard.

His warning was in vain, and that afternoon Bear rigged up another alarm system. Although it didn't go off, about nine o'clock he though he heard a faint sound and stepped out of the tent with a flashlight.

"Ten feet away a bear was blocking the path like a two ton truck. As near as we could figure afterward, he had come in for the bait, circled around my wire and was inching up for a close look at the tent when I surprised him."

When the others returned, Johnny suggested building a "mackin" — an elevated stand six or eight feet off the ground. Bear set up a vigil in it that night, and an hour after the moon went down became aware of a dark shape moving slowly.

"I was bundled in heavy cumbersome clothing. I'd have to shed my coat in order to get to full draw with the bow. I started to worm out of it in slow motion and while I was doing that Blackie sidled up to the bait.

"I wasn't quite ready for him when he stopped at the foot of the leaning aspen and reared up on his hind feet, his head almost level with mine and not more than fifteen feet away. The seconds ticked off, each one a minute long, till he dropped to all fours again. He hadn't located me, for he walked under the tree and when he came out on the downhill side I was ready."

Bear drove an arrow into the bear, heard the "satisfying sound of a good hit", and boasted to his companions, "We'll find this one ... he's lung shot."

At first light the ample blood trail led them to a thicket 200 yards from the tent. There they found the bear.

"Lung shot?" Bear chided himself. "My broadhead had sheared through the fleshy part of the hind leg just below the body, severing an artery and he had bled to death. That's what comes from shooting in the dark.

"But I felt good about one thing, anyway. He was the same bear I had nicked from the canoe. That arrow had cut a deep flesh wound, starting to heal now, on top of his shoulder, and the heavy bone had stopped it. So I hadn't left a crippled bear in the swamp after all."

Duncan Pledger is a journalist and bowhunter from Milton, Wisconsin, who contributes regularly to our Traditional Archives column.

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St. Sebastian's Renaissance Guild-Patrick Dolby, 2200 Carbine Ct., Sacramento, CA 95626, 916-991-7905
Three Feathers Traditional Archers-Al Penna, 5454 Filbert St., Paradise, CA 95969, apenna@chiconet.com

Colorado

Colorado Traditional Archers Association-Dean Derby, 693 Paradise Way, Grand Junction, CO 81506, 970-245-8859, deanderby@bresnan.net

Florida

Traditional Bowhunters of Florida-Greg Dudley, P.O. Box 1268, Weirsdale, FL 32195, 352-817-7832, dudley4pack@aol.com

Georgia

Horsecreek Traditional Archery Club-Cathy Slaughter, 220 Mulberry Ln., Cairo, GA 31728, 912-377-8276
Robin Hood Archery Club-John Hood, 2915 Cade Circle, Elberton, GA 30635, 706-283-4878
Tomo-Chi-Chi Traditional Bowmen-Randy Hardin, 195 Young's Circle, Fayetteville, GA 30215, 770-460-0103, rhardin@ajc.com
Traditional Bowhunters of Georgia-Jeff Kitchens, 130 Cedar Creek Ct., Fayetteville, GA 30215, 678-245-2177, jeffsk@comcast.net

Idaho

Idaho Traditional Bowhunters-Jeff Fealko, 3824 S. North Church Pl., Boise, ID 83716, 208-866-8753, www.idahotraditionalbowhunters.com
North Idaho Traditional Bowhunters-Kenneth Anderson, 620 W. Whitman St, Palouse, WA 99161, 509-878-1996, kwanderson@wsu.edu

Illinois

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Pyramid Archery Society Traditional-Brian Henderson, 7419 Persimmon Road, DuQuoin, IL 62832, hendersonpast46@yahoo.com
Southern Illinois Traditional Bowhunters-Bob Clark, 502 W St. Louis St., Pinckneyville, IL 62274
United Bowhunters of Illinois- Glenn Reinhardt, 3600 Brighton Bunker Hill Rd., Brighton, IL 62012, 618-372-814,stick-bow@hotmail.com, united-bowhuntersofillinois.org

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Indiana Traditional Bowhunters Association-J.D. Daniels, 13411 Hwy 62, Charlestown, IN 47111, 812-256-6229

Iowa

Iowa Traditional Bowhunters Society-Gene Winter, 1216 Rainbow Dr., Waterloo, IA 50701, 319-234-0292, www.iowatbs.com

Kansas

Wakarusa Valley Traditional Archers-Ed Ogle, 228 E 165th, Scranton, KS 66537, 785-793-2245

Kentucky

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Maine

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Maryland

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Massachusetts

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World Traditional Archers-633 E. Washington, #16, N. Attleboro, MA 02760, 508-643-2972

Michigan

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Superiorland Traditional Bowhunters-Steve Turay, P.O. Box 26, Marquette, MI 49855

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Nevada

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New Hampshire

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White Mountain Traditional Bowhunters-P.O. Box 33, Merrimack NH 03054, Contact Charlie Wilson bets4chas@comcast.net

New Jersey

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New Mexico

Southwest New Mexico Stickmen, Ernie Reyes, #7 Summit Rd, Silver City, NM 88061, 575-538-5820, archeryguru2@yahoo.com, www.swnmstickmen.webs.com

New York

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Mohawk-Hudson Traditional Archers-Jeff Vadney, 59 Vadney Rd, Delmar, NY 12054, 518-439-4732, www.freewebs.com/mohawkhudsontrad

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Tennessee Traditional Archery Society-Ethan Rodrigue, 795 Glendale Rd., Newbern, TN 38059, 731-627-3521, woodsmanbows@yahoo.com
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Traditional Bowhunters of Texas-Debbie Keeling, 928 Hwy 337 W., Vanderpool, TX 78885, 830-966-5185, keelingdeb@aol.com, www.tbot.org

Utah

Utah Wood Bow Club-Dan Perry, 184 E. 705 S, Salem, UT 84653, 801-423-2354

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Wisconsin

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Alberta, Canada

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Ontario, Canada

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Mexico

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Asociacion Tradicional De Caza y Tiro De Torreon-Jorge Zarzar, Acuna 364 Sur, Torreon Coah. 27000, Mexico 011-52-17-16-10-57
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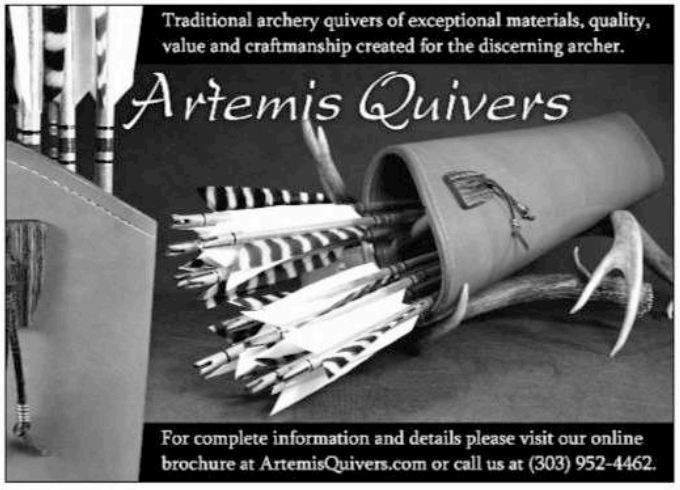

Silencing the Bowstring

By Brian Sorrells

String silencers, like most things in traditional archery, are a matter of personal choice and most archers have their favorite. What most people don't realize is the importance of choosing the right material and understanding what role string silencers play in the performance of your bow. They actually have the ability not only to deaden the vibration of the bowstring but also to affect the tuning and performance of your favorite longbow or recurve.

I remember many years ago, seeing a recurve with not one but two sets of the big, puffy yarn type silencers on the bowstring. I thought that looked really cool until I stood beside the guy while he shot and realized how noisy they were. Not only could I hear the "whoosh" of the silencers catching the wind, I could still hear the vibration of the bowstring after the shot. It dawned on me then that anything that big would have to generate wind resistance and slow down the bowstring and I decided that I would take the subject seriously.

There are many different styles of silencers available and natural materials seem to be trendy, though some of these may actually create noise as opposed to stopping it, depending on how the materials are processed. Take my friend's Black Widow recurve, for example. He had dressed it up with some beaver fur string silencers and soon noticed a strange "buzzing" noise when he shot the bow. He made sure the limb bolts were tight and checked everything over, but could not find the source of the noise. Fearing that perhaps some of the takedown hardware was coming loose, he sent the bow back

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to the manufacturer, who proceeded to completely disassemble the bow without finding the cause. As a last resort, he replaced the beaver fur silencers and the noise disappeared. Evidently the tanned fur vibrated at such a rate that it actually created noise.

Silencing your bow is a fairly simple matter, but you can do a lot to help the cause simply by shooting heavy arrows. The noise after the shot is created not only by the vibration of the bowstring, but by energy left over that was not absorbed by the arrow. Heavier arrows absorb more of the energy stored in the limbs, so there's less left over to cause noise. Between nine and eleven grains of arrow weight per pound of bow weight is a good rule of thumb.

Different materials have different properties, so they obviously vary in their ability to absorb vibration. The yarn silencers mentioned at the beginning may look cool, but the ability of yarn to absorb vibration is minimal at best. These also have a tendency to absorb water, so if you're hunting in wet weather, be prepared for a face full of spray when you shoot your bow.

Wool silencers are advertised to absorb less water but, like yarn, they definitely absorb stick-tights and weed seeds. During the brief time I used wool silencers, I spent way too much of that time picking sand burrs and seeds out of them. While they are a bit more efficient at silencing than yarn, they're not very effective when matted together.

Natural fur silencers can be effective as long as the hide that remains attached is soft and supple instead of hard tanned. Fur silencers are also a bit more water resistant and shed weed seeds better than wool or yarn. The downside is that fur silencers don't last as long as those made from other materials.

The spider shaped silencers that came with one of my custom longbows were a big disappointment. Even when I placed two sets on the bowstring, they did little to silence vibration, and the "legs" on the spider even created their own noise. A closer examination of the material revealed what appeared to be rubber coated cloth, much the same stuff that conveyor belts are made of. While they looked really sporty, they were useless on my bows.

We finally come to my favorite, plain old "Catwhiskers". In my humble opinion there is no better string silencer, period. Rubber is the best material for absorbing vibration and dampening sound. I'll bet that you'll see more Catwhiskers on more traditional bows than any other string silencer. That's because they work, they're waterproof, and they usually last as long as the bowstring. Some folks tie them on with serving material or floss, but I just tie them directly around the bowstring and trim them to length. Use care not to trim them too short, or they won't do the job.

When positioning the string silencers on the bowstring, make sure you place them equidistant from each limb tip to maintain balance. By plucking the bowstring and sliding the silencers up or down, you can find the "sweet spot" where they're most effective. Use the right silencers in the right place on the bowstring and you'll turn that annoying "twang" into a satisfying "thump"!

Regular contributor Brian Sorrells, a police and SWAT team officer from Bedford, Indiana, has written two bowhunting books, The Beginner's Guide to Traditional Archery and Traditional Bowhunting for Whitetails. When he's not taking his daughters Rachel and Claire to soccer, softball, and dance, he's busy shooting his Fox longbows, taking pictures, and writing more articles.

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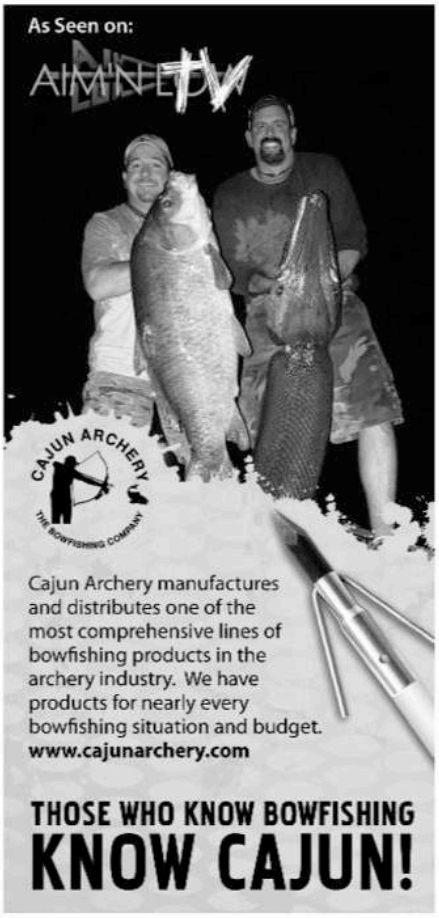

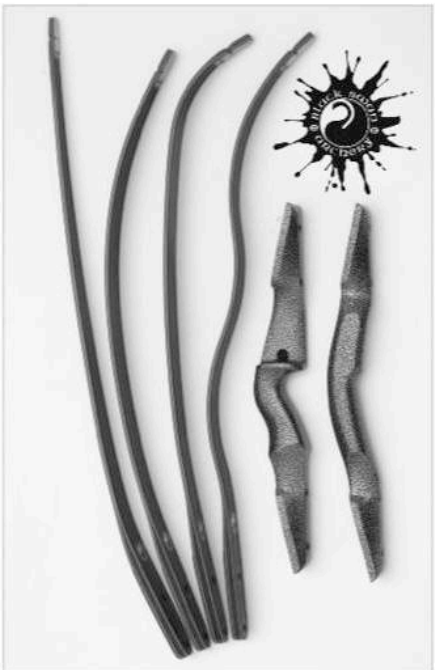

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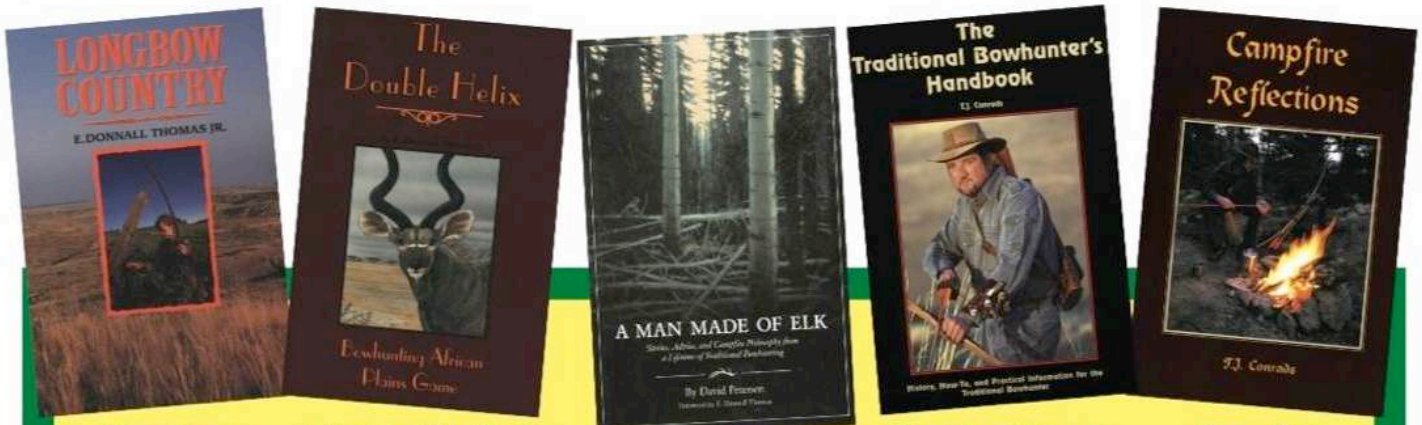

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Traditional Harvests

Rich Hershberger of Syracuse, NY, took this doe with a 52# Owl gemsbok horn bow made by Ed Scott.

Thirteen-year old Damon Lubinski of Lima, OH, with his first traditional harvest. Damon used a 48# Bear Kodiak Magnum and Grizzly 2-blade broadhead. Congratulations Damon!

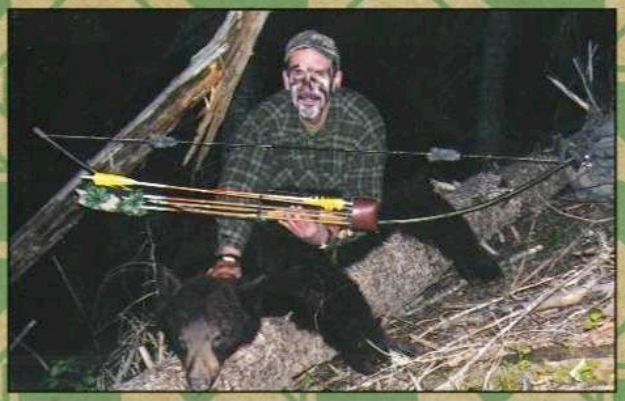
James Vanover of Linden, MI, with a gobbler he killed with a JV Outback longbow and Snuffer broadhead while using a Double Bull blind.

For his first traditional archery harvest, Ted Smith of Grantham, PA, used a 62# Elk Ridge Pilgrim longbow, Easton Legacy shaft, and Magnus Stinger broadhead.

Todd Gregory of Bradford, NH, with a bear he killed with a 60# Hummingbird bow and Zwickey No Mercy broadhead.

Greenville, MI bowhunter Jerry Guernsey with a buck he took with a Great Northern longbow, Easton shafting, and a Zwickey head.

This 275# Texas hog was shot by Rob Hecke of Tonganoxie, KS. Rob was shooting a 55# Holzrichter bow, Easton 2219 Legacy shafts, and 125-grain Woodsman heads.



Don Scholz of Portland, OR, took this Idaho black bear with a 57# Deathwish longbow, carbon arrow, and Steelforce head. Don was hunting with Russell Pond Outfitters.

The Traditional Harvests page is sponsored by Rod Bremer of Columbia River Knife and Tool (CRKT) in Portland, Oregon. Each issue one bowhunter, whose photo is bordered in red, is selected at random to receive a knife courtesy of Rod and CRKT.

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Aldo Leopold on a bowhunt in the southwest. Photo courtesy of the Aldo Leopold Foundation.

Aldo Leopold: Pioneer Archer and Bowyer

By Dave Sigurslid

For the bowyer and archer, there can be no better inspiration than Aldo Leopold, arguably the greatest naturalist/hunter of the last century and a saint in the ecologic movement. As it turns out, he was also a bowyer, archer and hunter. Witness his description, paraphrased, of a hunt in the Rio Gavilan 80 years ago:

"A savage wind howls along the mesa rim, screaming through the pinyons as the sun melts onto the horizon. The lone archer shivers toward camp, followed by a raven croaking off the rim. Suddenly, three whitetails burst from their grassy beds and bound away. The hunter looks for 'horns' but it is too dark; they are too far away. Tomorrow perhaps ...

"And sure enough, the next morning he gets a shot, a 70-yard one, at a nice buck. The arrow strikes right where the deer was standing a split second before it jumped the arrow. Later that day, 40 turkeys volley off the rim just as the bowhunter sneaks into range.

"Finally comes the archer's best chance: a buck, partially obscured by pines, grazes only 50 yards away. 'I... drew to the barb at point blank, and let fly. The unmistakable thud of the arrow striking flesh told me I had hit ... ' "

Hunters of all stripes give tradition lip service, but traditional archers honor it. Saps for the extravagance of archery past, we wax sentimental over the classical icons of archery's Golden Age: Pope, St. Charles, Young, the Thompsons, Nagler, Stevenson, Duff, Hill ... the list goes on. We today might call many of them hunter-naturalists, that is, hunters AND tree huggers. And why not? It takes trees to make forests, and forests to make habitat for wildlife. Among that noble bunch of tree huggers, Leopold was exemplary. He formed the ideal of *naturalist*-hunter and guided the thinking of conservationists (and some hunters) for decades. Still does.

Nowadays, if you mention environmental conservation and hunting in the same breath, except to point out opposing views, you will invite contention. Urban environmentalists often disparage the hunter. Conversely, the concept of environmentalism often as not furrows hunters' brows. But Leopold was both hunter *and* environmentalist. And contrary to current thinking, these factions have much more in common than not. Leopold taught us how the two go together.

He was an early advocate of the wilderness preservation movement. Though formally trained as a forester, he became a renowned professor in the field he personally invented, Game Management. And he was also the consummate hunter, archer, and bow maker who found a way to blend these interests and make them complimentary.

Leopold's concern for both environmentalism and hunting formed the first concept of deep ecology, though this term only appeared after his death. Leopold summed up these principles in his "land ethic," which suggested a multi-faceted approach to land stewardship. He first suggested that it is not enough to hike in wilderness, to merely

know the names of things and profess love of the landscape. Nor is it enough to cultivate and preserve creatures only to kill them, as hunters and their agencies often do. Alone, these qualities are insufficient to satisfy the concept of the land ethic. Together, along with active guardianship and promotion of degraded lands to a more pristine state, they define it.

Here is how Leopold himself described his land ethic concept:

"... the individual is a member of a community of interdependent parts. His instincts prompt him to compete for his place in the community, but his ethics prompt him also to cooperate... In short, a land ethic changes the role of Homo sapiens from conqueror of the land-community to plain member and citizen of it ... A land ethic, then, reflects the existence of an ecological conscience, and this in turn reflects a conviction of individual responsibility for the health of the land."

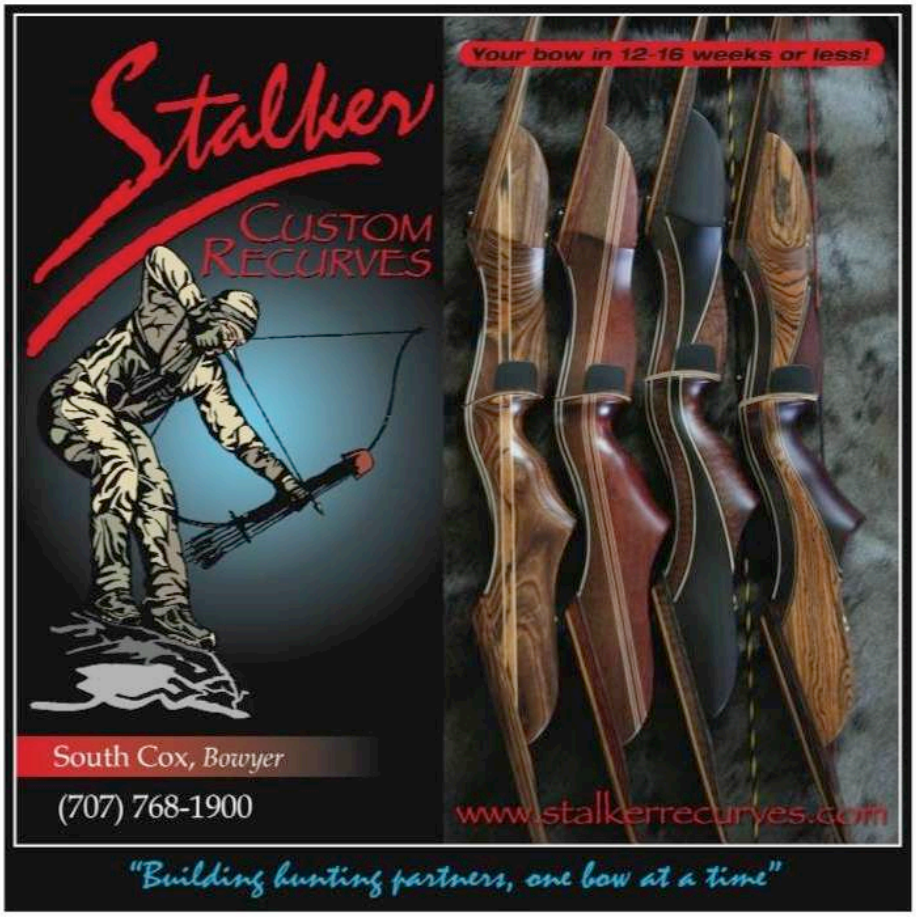
Leopold came to formulate his land ethic through his exposure to a wide variety of habitats, among them the Rio Gavilan in Chihuahua, Mexico. The Rio Gavilan proved pivotal to Leopold's evolving concept of wilderness.

Before going in, he had already defined the basic values of truly wild land for himself. But this wilderness concept was derived from his familiarity with the overgrazed and eroded wild lands of the southwest. Sheep and cattle had decimated these habitats for half a century or more before Leopold ever saw New Mexico, so his concept of wilderness was biased. Missing from his idea of wilderness were the value of predators and the role of wildfire.

Back in his early days, people thought killing predators meant greater numbers of species they favored. Leopold was one of the first to call this idea into question back in the 1930s and '40s. Today only the flat earth biologists among us think that way. The point is that far-seeing thinkers like Leopold often bring out progressive ideas before their time, and they still do (see Shepard, Soule, Geist, Cartmill).

In 1944 he wrote his confessional. In "Thinking Like A Mountain" he describes a pre-Gavilan attitude: "In those days we had never heard of passing up a chance to kill a wolf." He describes a female wolf and her six whelps that "sprang from the willows and all joined in a welcoming melee of wagging tails and playful maulings." He describes how he then pumped "lead into the pack" and decimated the family. After all the shooting was over, "the old wolf was down, and a pup was dragging a leg into impassable slide-rocks." The shooters descended to inspect their work on the mother, arriving just in time to witness "a fierce green fire dying in her eyes." In the mea culpa that follows, Leopold movingly accepts responsibility for his role in this and prior despoliations of the wild: "After seeing the green fire die, I sensed that neither the wolf nor the mountain agreed" with wanton slaughter of predators and ill-informed attempts at managing complex ecologic communities with simple solutions like destroying predators.

Thus Leopold had come partially to terms with the role of predators in wilderness. He believed predators belonged in truly wild lands but had no idea what such arrangements might



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look like. Besides, in the US (even now) predators were (and are) destroyed wholesale, so Leopold had no grasp of what a well-balanced system including predators might resemble. Before he went to the Rio Gavilan, that is …

Fire was the other variable missing in his concept of wilderness. By the time he served as a forester (16 years in New Mexico and Arizona, 1908-1924) forests were guarded against fire as vigilantly as the times allowed, while logging continued unmitigated. The ageless cycle of fire and landscape had long been broken except for relatively small tracts. All Leopold's preconceptions about wild lands changed when he went to the Rio Gavilan, and it was his love of archery that took him there to solidify his ideas about what real wilderness should be.

In "The Green Lagoons," Leopold tells the story of a hunting trip he and his brother took to the Colorado River Delta in 1922. The record is of historical importance, because that delta paradise no longer exists (now it's just a big melon farm). This essay illustrates the way he blended love and knowledge of the wild with participation in its life and death economy (i.e. by hunting).

When I first read the essay as a college freshman, I was ignorant of both Leopold's importance in the conservation movement and his fascination with archery. As an avid archer myself, I noticed a drawing (by Charles Schwartz) in the essay of an arrow stuck in the ground. I skimmed over this illustration and assumed the arrow to be a lyrical device, a fanciful portrayal of an Indian's bad luck. Another drawing of a similar arrow and a Kaibab squirrel punctuate Leopold's essay "A Man's Leisure Time." This time the words of the essay gave the arrow's meaning away:

"There is a subversive belief among laymen that in the hands of an expert the bow is an efficient weapon. Each fall, less than a hundred Wisconsin experts register to hunt deer with the broad headed arrow. One out of the hundred may get a buck, and he is surprised. One out of five riflemen gets his buck. As an archer, therefore, and on the basis of our record, I indignantly deny this allegation of efficiency. I admit only this: that making archery

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tackle is an effective alibi for being late at the office or failing to carry out the ashcan on Thursdays."

This was a revelation to me: The primary proponent of the wilderness concept talks bowhunting! There was more: "When I look at a rough, lumpy, heavy, splintery stave of *bois d'arc* and envision the perfect gleaming weapon that will one day emerge from its graceless innards, and when I picture that bow, drawn in a perfect arc, ready — in a split second — to cleave the sky with its shining javelin, I must envision also the probability that it may — in a split second — burst into impotent splinters while I face another laborious month of evenings at the bench."

Even though these words establish Leopold's interest in archery, the significance of the drawings and pertinent words held no importance to me back in 1967. I was an archer then, but not until later in life when I became afflicted by real wood bow fanaticism did the illustrations and writing really sink in.

Unfortunately, the quotes from "A Man's Leisure Time" comprise *in toto* Leopold's teaching on the wood bow within his most widely known works. He was first and foremost a conservationist and wrote extensively in that venue. But he left an interesting record of his involvement with archery in a special *Archery Journal*.

According to Curt Meine, who authored the definitive 1988 biography (*Aldo Leopold: His Life and Work*), Leopold began the outdoor life as an avid bird hunter. His apprenticeship consisted of carrying an empty shotgun and reciting his father's exacting rules of hunting and gun safety. He had his own shotgun by age twelve, with which he killed a lot of game, primarily waterfowl, rabbits, and predatory birds. Like others of his time, he believed that fewer predatory birds meant greater numbers of desirable species (he later changed his mind). While at Yale he quit hunting but picked it up again in his twenties. After his service as a forester in the Southwest, he moved to Wisconsin in 1924, and that is where his interest in archery began.

Leopold's first mention of archery appears in an entry for June 15, 1924 in his *Wisconsin Journal*. He and his family had gone on a northern Wisconsin fishing vacation and Leopold wrote: "I made Starker [his son] a bow of white cedar." Aldo revealed no further details of this bow's construction, but Starker was only ten years old at the time, so the bow was probably of a very rudimentary nature. Two days later Aldo was trying to find a way to catch spawning carp. He wrote that he "also tried a bow and arrow," but he had little success with them and ended up using a spear.

He was 36 years old when he "discovered" archery. Saxton Pope's classic *Hunting With the Bow and Arrow* came out in 1925, and Leopold read it and caught a bug that brought on a bow and arrow affliction of the worst (best) sort. That bug also infected the rest of his family, including the women. In fact, Leopold's wife Estella became the Wisconsin women's state archery champion and kept that title for five years. She even placed fourth at Nationals once. Leopold himself shot somewhat less successfully in competition.

By early 1926, Leopold was making his own archery

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- Ed Dentry, Outdoor Writer

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gear. He worked every night in his basement, and archery became his greatest passion. He recorded information in his *Archery Journal*; shooting scores, wood performance characteristics, flight shooting distances, and instructions for making equipment all found space there. Among the latter, he detailed instructions for making a cord handle for a bow, laying leaf/foil crests on arrows, and planing footed shafts. He and his family spent hours on weekends roving and shooting together. He wrote instructions on how to place his feet while shooting, hold the bow, and posture himself while standing. He later published a couple of archery-related papers, "Turkish Bows of the New Mexico Indians" and "Glues for Wood in Archery."

Like the modern traditional archer, Leopold scrounged for bow and arrow building material wherever he could. While out crow and owl hunting in April,1926 (presumably with a shotgun), Leopold spied a red-tailed hawk, fair game in those days. "We needed some arrow feathers but did not feel like shooting her," he wrote in his *Archery Journal*.

During this and subsequent years, Leopold conducted experiments on all kinds of wood suitable for bow making. Until the end of 1926, he shot primarily while roving at Wingra Park near Madison. Then in November of that year, Leopold took his bows hunting. He drove to the Ashton Woods near Madison with sons Luna and Starker:

"This was my first serious attempt to use the bow on game. I learned these things:

"Bow must be strung and arrow nocked at all times.

"Special practice on 10 and 15 yard shooting is necessary. My bow must be held 12" and 18" low respectively.

"Stand on stumps and don't move. A hopping rabbit has both eyes and ears open.

"Running shots present a fair chance up close."

They saw 20 rabbits, ten squirrels and 15 grouse that day, shot at several, and managed to kill one of each quadruped.

In 1927, Leopold's hunting interests with the bow and arrow expanded. That November, he, his two sons, and a friend traveled to New Mexico's Gila River country to hunt turkey and deer. During their two week stay they saw large numbers of both species, and Aldo got two shots at deer. One arrow struck flesh — "as near as I could tell in the fore ribs or shoulder." But Aldo never recovered this animal, though he searched for it for days. Wounded psychologically by the incident, the continued appearance of game in large numbers assuaged his guilt somewhat. The archers went back to Wisconsin empty-handed but enthusiastic: "I never saw such a hunting ground," wrote Leopold after getting home.

He liked bowhunting the Gila well enough to return in 1929. Again Leopold spent two weeks wandering that spectacular country. And again he failed to take a deer despite seeing over 200 of them, but he enjoyed himself immensely.

These Gila adventures were important for reasons other than sharpening passions for bowhunting. As on all of his hunting adventures, Leopold gathered material and collected thoughts for his writing. Some of his most influential essays were either initiated or amplified by his Gila trips.

Though Aldo had very little success killing big game

with his bow, archery hunting nevertheless became an obsession. His undiluted opinion is evident in a letter he scribbled to archery equipment purveyor Roy Case, dated 1935, in which Leopold wrote: "There is simply no sport superior to bow and arrow deer hunting."

For the last 23 years of his too-short life, Leopold made and shot bows. He devoted countless evenings to fashioning archery equipment, and incalculable hours scouring the hills with the gear he made. His notions of artistry in bow making and writing, his concept of beauty in truly wild land, and the harmonious blend of the two came together best on his Sand County farm. Here's how he ended up owning it.

In the autumn of 1934, Wisconsin held its first archery-only deer season, also the first in the nation. The Leopold family and their friends gathered and hunted in the sand country north of Lodi, 20 miles from Madison. They so enjoyed the experience that all agreed it should become an annual event. All they needed was a more reliable hunting camp.

For several years Leopold had been looking for some country property from which to headquarter his bow hunts. In January, 1935 he leased 80 acres, a burned out farmhouse, and a chicken coop, the latter filled with guano, in Sauk County, Wisconsin. He later bought the place and after cleaning out the chicken coop, turned it into the clapboard cabin he called "The Shack." This farm served as a refuge from work and city and a hunting camp until Leopold died fighting a fire there in 1948. But perhaps more significantly, this Sand County farm was also the place where he gathered his material and wrote his conservation masterpiece, *Sand County Almanac*.

In September of 1936, Leopold and companions went bowhunting in the Sierra Madre Occidental in northern Chihuahua, Mexico. This land, which had never been pastured, impressed Leopold immensely. He described it as "near to being the cream of creation," and the "definition of undisturbed wilderness." Here was a condition of habitat Leopold had never seen. Watercourses flowed intact, mountain lions roamed, and lightning regularly kindled fire in the mountains. He described the game, deer and turkeys, as abundant but not excessive. Leopold underwent a transformation on this trip and developed a concept of land health that influenced him for the rest of his life. His wonderful essays "Guacamaja" and "Song of the Gavilan" were direct inspirations from this Mexican bow hunting adventure:

"The song of the waters is audible to every ear, but there is other music in these hills, by no means audible to all. To hear even a few notes of it you must live here a long time, and you must know the speech of hills and rivers. Then on a still night, when the campfire is low and the Pleiades have climbed over rimrocks, sit quietly and listen for a wolf to howl, and think hard of everything you have seen and tried to understand. Then you may hear it — a vast pulsing harmony — its score inscribed on a thousand hills, its notes the lives and deaths of plants and animals, its rhythms spanning the seconds and the centuries."

Who but professors and hunters love land like that?

He went back to the Gavilan in 1937. Those Mexico trips

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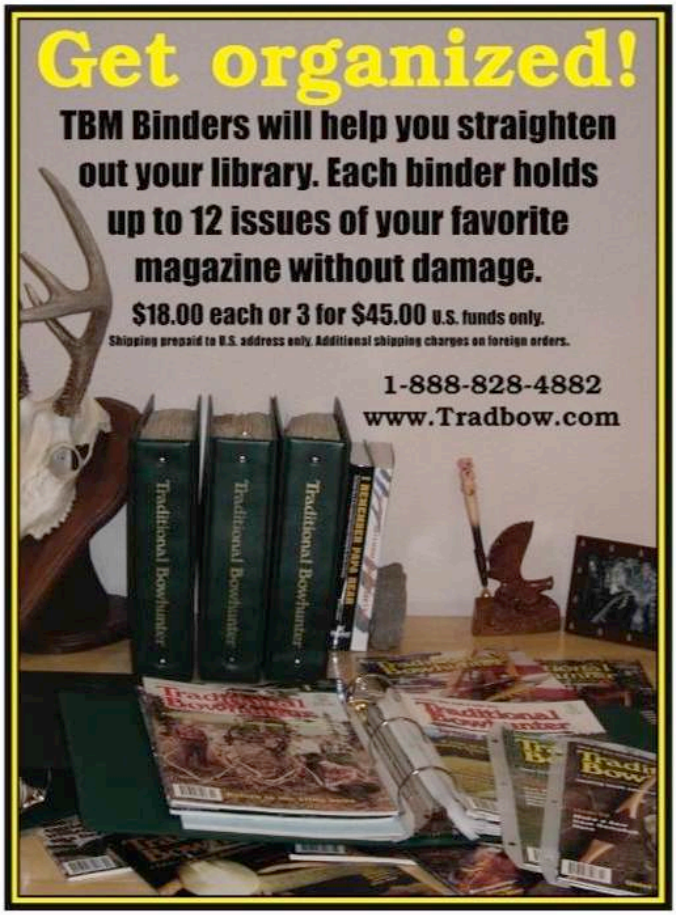

accelerated Leopold's advocacy of wild lands, culminating in designation of the system of wilderness areas we know today. Thus, the Rio Gavilan archery hunting trips contributed to wild lands' posterity.

Leopold lived an intense life and poured his passion into both his work and his recreation. He set an example for true stewardship of land. He coupled the concepts of hunting and conservation into a coherent position. Because his contributions to conservation and nature writing overshadow it, we do not often appreciate what an enthusiastic archer and dedicated bowyer he was.

Archery led him to some of the most precious and beautiful land in North America. It contributed to his greatest literary works by helping to provide motivation and material for their subject matter. Because we wood bow fanatics improve our own connection to nature through our art, it is easy to understand how Leopold gained some of his inspiration from archery. It is therefore no small matter that archery formed one of the key underpinnings in the life of this great environmentalist hunter, who wrote from the Rio Gavilan:

"His horns and ears were silhouetted against the golden grama beyond, in which grew the green rosette of a mescal … I overshot, my arrow splintering on the rocks… as the buck bounded down the mountain with a good-bye wave of his snowy flag, I realized that he and I were actors in an allegory. Dust to dust, stone age to stone age, but always the eternal chase … "

*All **TBM** readers know Dave Sigurslid from his regular contributions to our Campfire Philosopher back page column. Dave lives in Colorado, where he makes bows, hunts with them, and practices holistic medicine.*

Author's Note

Bibliographic materials include Leopold's published work, his *Wisconsin Journal* dating from 1924, his *Archery Journal*, his correspondence, and Kurt Meine's fine biography. Thanks to William Meier at the University of Wisconsin for providing the journal material.

"The teachers you need are disappointment and humiliation. If these cure you of still-hunting, it is well, for it proves you were not born for that, and the sooner you quit it the better. But if there is any of the true spirit in you, defeat will only inspire you. You will learn more from your failures than many do from success, and they will arouse you to double care, double energy, double keenness, and double hope."

— Theodore S. Van Dyke

These wise words were printed over a century ago in reference to still-hunting with a rifle, but they can certainly be applied to traditional bow hunting and especially to still-hunting with a bow. The following story is not one of traditional success; it's one of failure, but then again that conclusion may be left open to interpretation …

Measuring Success

By Anthony Triolo

I don't have much experience bowhunting. In fact, during all the years I spent hunting in the United States, I never picked up a bow. But I was certainly intrigued by this form of hunting. It wasn't, however, until I found myself living in France that the whispering of stick and string grew too loud to ignore. So after qualifying for the national hunting permit and joining a few associations, I fell in with a group of traditional archers from Marseille. Their enthusiasm and passion for traditional bowhunting only made my own thirst unquenchable.

On our first hunt together, contrary to the wisdom of Van Dyke, I met with early success when I shot a 7-year old male mouflon (a species similar to the bighorn sheep, found in the Alps) from six yards. I'd spent the morning pushing a herd of six mouflon up and down the rocky slopes of *Les Dourbes* in northern Provence, trying to get close enough for a shot that never materialized. That afternoon, I decided to sit still and let the game come to me. Sure enough — a half hour later the herd's big male was standing in front of me. I'm still not sure where he came from or how he got there. My arrow pierced his liver, and he fell to the ground about 40 yards away. The walk out with the mouflon lashed to a branch resting on our shoulders was filled with laughter and near disbelief. Needless to say, I was floating with pride for the rest of that year.

Only now after two more seasons under my belt do I fully appreciate Van Dyke's writing. Not that I'm not grateful for hunts like that first one, but in terms of a genuine learning experience, that day pales in comparison with other days that didn't finish nearly as well. That early success influenced the way I hunted the rest of that season and the next. Unfortunately it cured me of most of my desire to still-hunt. I started to believe that bowhunting success required staying still in a fixed position, and maintained that belief until an inadvertent but remarkable experience challenged it.

As we had done the two previous years, every Sunday during hunting season we left the sunny beaches of Provence to venture into the mountains in the northern portions of the region. After a two-hour ride from Marseille, we are all eager to start hunting. The mountains surrounding Digne-les-Bains average between three and five thousand feet in elevation. Wild boar, roe deer, mouflon, and chamois inhabit the area. This Sunday in particular, we were hunting mouflon as it was nearing the end of the rut in mid-November.

Dawn was fast approaching as we twisted up the narrow mountain road, skidding and slipping on sporadic patches of ice. After parking the car, we still had a half hour walk to our designated hunting grounds. In France, hunting is highly regulated, without the luxury of hunting on public lands at minimal cost that Americans enjoy. Therefore much of the off-season is spent deciding what tags to buy for which animals in which territories. Fortunately for me, the members of the group I hunt with have dealt with this system all their lives and know its ins and outs.

That morning was the coldest of the season. The first real frost we had seen all year covered the ground, and the earth underfoot felt hard as stone. There was no chance of tracking that morning. We were hunting the same slope where I had shot the mouflon two years prior. I knew the area much better by that time and was silently formulating strategy as we approached.

A view from the territory of Les Dourbes and Alps' higher elevations.

Richard and Bernard decided to take the lower portion of the slope while Seb and I attacked the upper slope in an effort to ambush the herd that usually worked uphill in the morning. The winds were stable, but the sun had yet to peer over *Les Dourbes*, the massif to the east.

I decided to follow a logging path that cut a little bit higher than midway through the wooded slope. I had a fixed position in mind at the crossroads of a small draw where I had noticed a lot of activity on previous hunts. As we were off to a late start, I figured it would be better to begin higher than usual to get a jump on any of the mouflons already in transit, especially since the sun would likely push the wind up the slope once it crested the peak.

My calculation was correct, but my timing was late. The sun had come up, and as predicted the air current began to rise gently. The sun's rays glared into my eyes, seriously diminishing my vision. I was lucky to see the herd of seven mouflon, six females united in harem with a male, in the middle of the logging road before they saw me. Fortunately the road rose before me in a series of knolls, helping to keep me hidden.

The animals were preoccupied feeding on the tall grass that grew along the centerline of the logging road, and they were already in the draw where I had hoped to intersect them. Putting a gentle knee upon the frozen surface, I raised my binoculars. The ram looked good, and I chided myself for arriving late. I had just taken too much time on the walk up, examining tracks and scat. I thought it might be possible to lie in wait there 150 yards out in hope they might slowly make their way down the road, but my binoculars confirmed that they were ever so slowly moving in the opposite direction.

I stopped to analyze the situation. The good news: I was still undiscovered, there was a steady rising crosswind, and the terrain broke up my silhouette. The bad news: the sun was still in my face, 150 yards separated us, and movement off the road was impossible because of thick brush. Meanwhile, the sheep kept inching farther away.

It was time to act. After shedding my binoculars and pack, I started crawling. Balancing speed against stealth, I inched my way forward, pausing frequently to check the wind and the sheep's position. I continued on my hands and knees until the road leveled, forcing me to my stomach. The cold seeped into my chest and legs whenever I stopped to rest, obliging me to continue.

Despite the cold, after an hour of this my arms were burning. I had successfully closed the gap to 50 yards and remained unnoticed. However, getting close enough for an effective shot still seemed miles away. Then after all my work, the animals finished their breakfast, and the herd slipped off the road and down the slope.

I couldn't believe my eyes. I had struggled to get that far and only needed a few more yards for a confident shot, but in a matter of seconds all seemed lost. When I picked myself up, it felt good to be a biped again. I raced back to where I had dropped my gear, grabbed it, and cut down the slope myself. Knowing the area, I hoped to intersect the mouflons on their way down, as another logging road below me ran parallel to the one I was on, and I thought it might be possible to cut them off as they crossed it.

Clumsily making my way down the slope, I hit the other path and started to work my way up it at a trot. Nearing the spot where I thought the sheep might appear, I stopped, caught my breath, and listened. I knew they were close, but where? Had they crossed behind me, or farther along, or not at all?

I decided to advance toward a large draw 75 yards ahead where I had seen many bedding sites in the past. One advantage of hunting that draw was that sound echoed out of it like an amphitheater. Several minutes passed before I heard the sound of pawing coming from the draw before me. Ten minutes later, I spotted a pair of white legs on the other side. After watching I verified that these were the sheep that had left me on the road, and the male with his harem were climbing back uphill in that direction.

Nevertheless, I had one more chance. It was impossible to cross the draw silently. Therefore, I decided to return to the upper road and try to get there ahead of them. The climb proved steeper and longer than I expected. With heart pounding and legs burning, I reached the top and took a knee in order to catch my breath. Regaining my composure, I continued along the original road until I reached a point 25 yards from where I thought they might appear. I didn't want to get too close, because I feared my scent might carry toward them.

I crouched in front of a small bush on the side of the road and waited with an arrow on my string. Just as cramps began to set in, I heard rustling in the leaves right where I had convinced myself they would appear. And sure enough—four ewes popped into sight, turned, and looked back down the slope, offering a beautiful broadside shot. I had a permit for a female. Frozen with doubt, I wondered if I should wait for the male or take a female now that I had a certain shot. Finally, I drew the string back and released. Unfortunately, the arrow flew just above her back, and the broadhead struck the trunk of a beech tree ten yards behind her. So much for my certain shot! The four ewes took off at a gallop, crossing the road and dashing up the slope out of sight

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A fine mouflon ram taken by the author in the French Alps. Left to right, Richard, Christophe, and Bernard.

I immediately nocked another arrow. That ram was down there somewhere, and there was still a possibility that he would cross the road. Fifteen minutes later, he appeared ten yards past the beech tree, roughly 40 yards from me. I forced the string back to my chin, but as I watched him cross the road, I slowly brought the arrow back to rest. The shot just wasn't there. The ram melted away into the oaks, beeches, and underbrush.

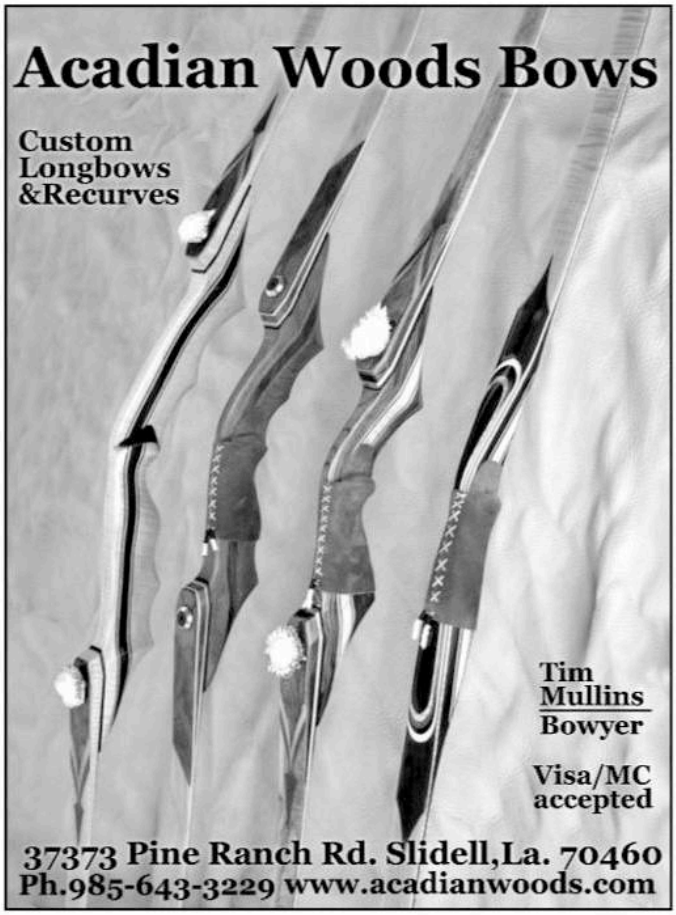
I thought about pushing on, but I knew that Seb was somewhere above me and I decided to let him have a crack at the sheep. It had been five hours since I first spotted them on the road that morning. I had followed them up and down the mountain, applying every bit of skill and knowledge I had picked up in the last two years. I had maintained almost constant contact and managed to release a legitimate shot. Furthermore, I had regained confidence in still-hunting while recognizing weak points in my skills that I needed to work on in the seasons ahead. During those short but seemingly eternal five hours, I finally learned to appreciate what a successful hunt really is.

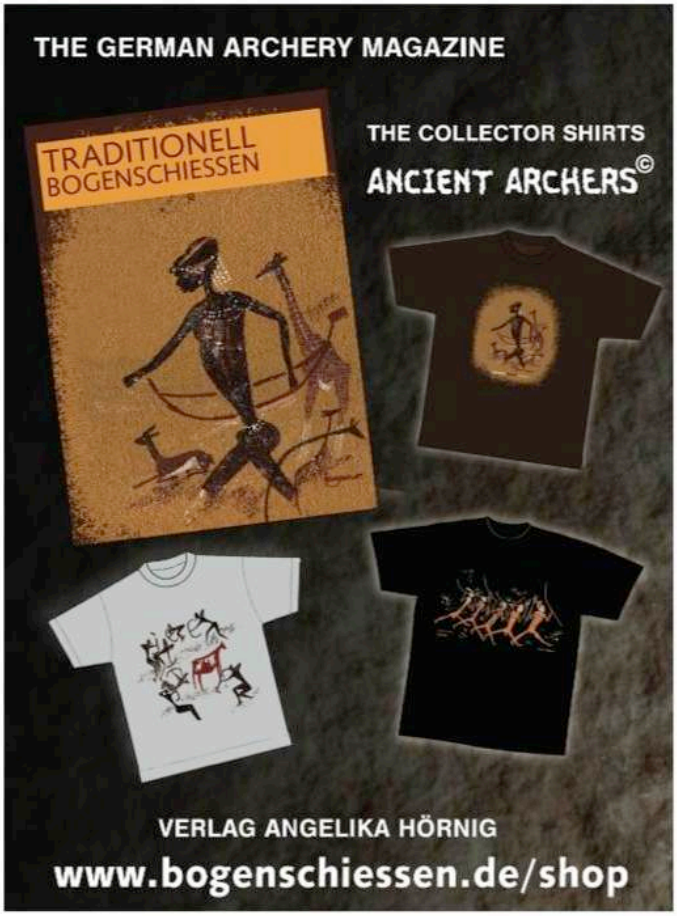
That afternoon, the walk back to the car was filled with just as much laughter as two years prior, and I was filled with another kind of pride as I dreamed of my next hunt.

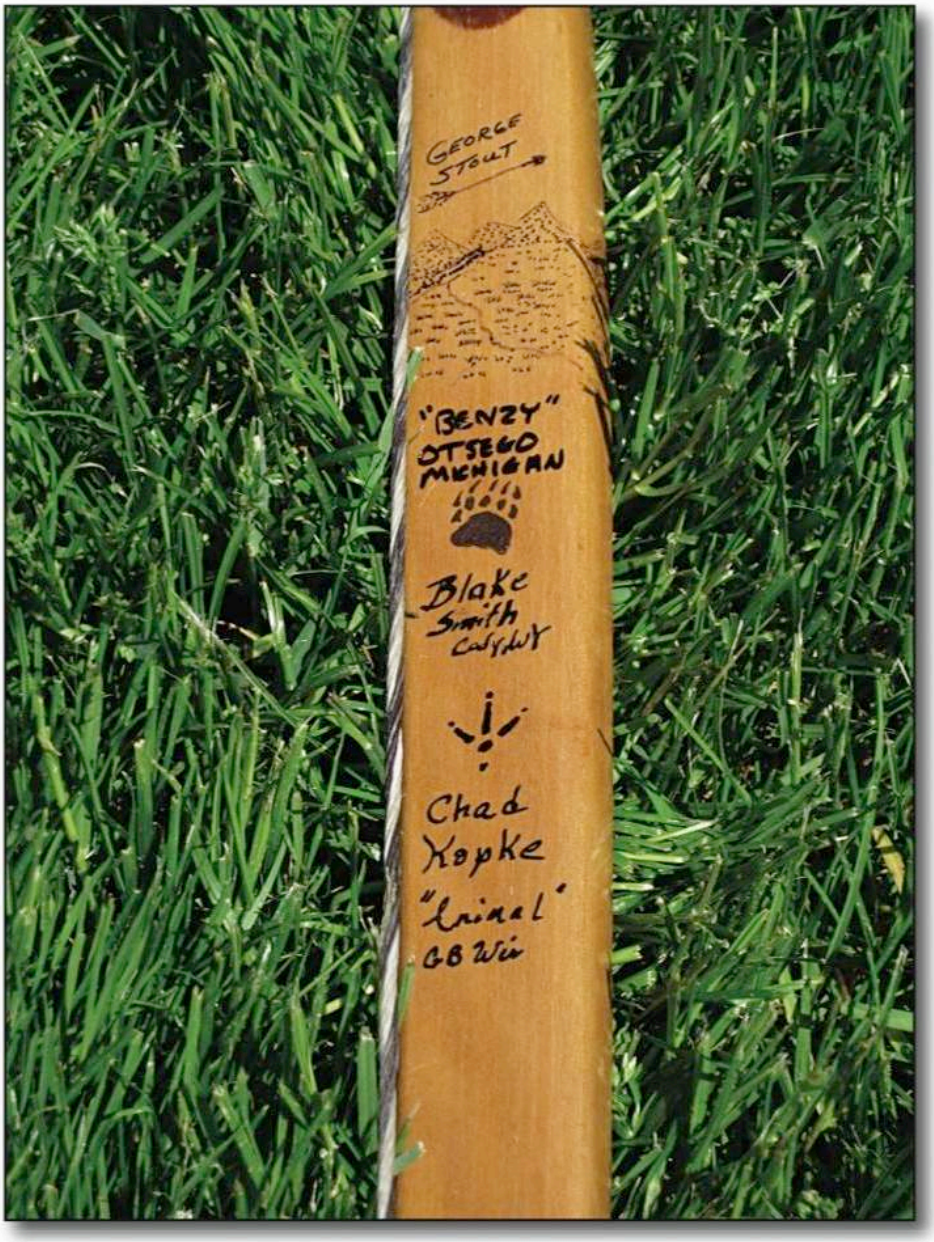
Anthony Triolo is a Professor of International Relations in Aix-en-Provence, France, where he lives with his wife and two children.

Equipment Note

The author hunted with a 60# Rodney Wright Firehawk Longbow, 2020 Easton Legacy arrows, and Eclipse broadheads.







A Stick with Many Branches

By George Stamps

I could hardly believe that Buck would be arriving any day. Since extending the invitation to visit and having it accepted I had been counting down the days. Even though he would be arriving too late for deer and too early for turkey, I planned to take him to some of my favorite stumping areas and felt sure that we would get along just fine. Since leaving his home in Pennsylvania, Buck had kept busy traveling across the United States. He made his first stop in Michigan before heading west to Wyoming, where he spent a month and even managed to attend the Bowhunters of Wyoming Annual Banquet. Shortly after his visit to the West he went to Wisconsin, where he spent some time on a mountain bike looking for new adventures.

By now you probably think Buck is an old family friend or perhaps a favorite uncle with itchy feet, but the truth is that he is a lemonwood bow 66 inches in length and 52#@28" owned by George Stout of Pennsylvania. Woodcraft Equipment Company made the bow well over 40 years ago. George purchased it from an acquaintance in 1989, and at different times he had offered to give the old bow away to a young hunter. Due to its 52-pound draw weight kids were unable to shoot it, so it held a place in the corner of his shop until one afternoon in 1992, when George decided to give the old bow a tour of his yard. George discovered that he and the bow were a good fit, and it did not take long for him to decide that they would try to put some venison on the table together once the season opened.

When it finally did, opening day found him in a patch of scrub oaks next to a hickory tree. As luck would have it, everything fell into place that morning and soon he found himself watching a group of five bucks feeding his way. After several minutes, George took a shot at the lead buck at a whopping eight steps. The limbs flexed and sent the shaft where it needed to go, and soon he was kneeling by the 7-pointer giving thanks for the harvest.

Buck and George spent the next several years enjoying the Pennsylvania outdoors. In 2006, George decided he would like to send Buck to anyone

Ole Buck and Mr. Stout's deer.

interested in shooting him for a month with the stipulation he be signed before heading to the next person on the list. George posted his plan on Stickbow.com and the idea took off like a July grass fire. Soon the bow's itinerary was full, and Buck was on his way to Michigan.

After visiting four different states in as many months, July of 2006 found the bow in the hands of Dick Wightman in Seattle, Washington. In order to help everyone keep up with the bow's travels, Dick decided to set up a web page where photos and a brief note on the bow's travels could be updated after each participant shipped Buck to the next person on the list. Dick had made plans to attend the North American Longbow Safari in Oregon with the bow as his sidekick. After enjoying NALS, they returned home and spent the rest of their time roving along the Pacific Coast Trail. Due to scheduling issues, Buck took his leave of Seattle early to continue his adventures.

By now, it was normal to log onto Stickbow and see a thread or two discussing where the bow was and what the next person on the list planned to do once he got him. People all across the country stayed connected through Buck and his travels, due to the generosity of Mr. Stout. The piece of lemonwood had truly become a stick with many branches.

When my turn came and I walked into the house to see that shipping tube waiting for me, it felt like Christmas in March. I received the bow on Wednesday and would not be able to try him out until the weekend. When the time finally came, I loaded my quiver with cedars, and with my wife acting as official photographer we headed for a local WMA for a little fun. Once we arrived and started our stroll through the woods, I noticed a rotten log begging for a cedar. I nocked an arrow and took aim. Since this was the first time I had shot a bow off my knuckle, I wondered whether I would miss by inches or feet, but was pleasantly surprised to see the arrow go right where I was aiming.

I spent the next few hours rambling, enjoying the woods, and shooting. The day passed too quickly, and soon it was time to leave. I took the bow for woods walks as often as I could, but soon my month with Buck was up, and I had to send the bow down the road for the next person to enjoy. I still anxiously followed Buck's travels through Mr. Wightman's web page and the threads on Stickbow.

Buck has continued his travels from east to west and even managed to attend NALS again in June of 2007, this time in British Columbia. Buck became so popular that some of his hosts began scouring the internet hoping to locate his twin or at least a close relative. I found myself wanting to keep the bow when I had him but realized that the bow had become something owned by all of us and that it would feel wrong to disrupt his travels.

As his signatures have grown, so have the friendships. Traditional archers tend to treat each other like extended family, and this situation is no different. It has been three years since this all started, and Buck still continues his travels, revisiting some of us for a second time and adding new adventures as more people hear about him.

In the end, it doesn't matter where the bow went or where it will be going. The real value of his travels lies in the fact that Buck has created friendships and strengthened what was already a bond we all shared, the love of traditional archery—all thanks to one man who wanted to share what has turned out to be a very special bow. I want to thank Mr. Stout for his generosity, Mr. Wightman for taking the time to chronicle the bow's adventures, and everyone who shared their pictures and stories of their time with the bow.

George Stamps resides in Kentucky. He hopes to entertain Buck again in the near future.

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Novels in Nature

By Clay Hayes

"Every farm is a textbook on animal ecology; woodsmanship is the translation of the book" — Aldo Leopold, Sand County Almanac

Leopold had a wonderful knack for looking at common things in not so common ways. He saw the world through a woodsman's eyes and was able to decipher the relationships between wildlife and land. The type of farm to which he refers in the quote above is one of brush piles and hedgerows, weedy fields and wetlands, one where wildlife abounds. I've always loved that quote and have spent the better part of my life putting it to action, gaining the skills, acquiring the knowledge, and developing the attitude required to read the kind of stories that Leopold so adeptly translated. Through the woodsman's eye, there are stories in all things; the landscape is full of them. There is a story in every deer track, bent leaf, overturned stone, tree, and grain of sand — stories written not in words and phrases, but in sign. Once upon a time every hunter accumulated a fair stash of woodsmanship, but sadly, much of that has gone by the wayside.

Woodsmanship isn't some mysterious and unattainable level of skill or knowledge. It isn't a lost art only to be read about in history books. It's a continuum, a sliding scale of knowledge attained and solidified and skills tested and honed. Having the skills — camping, orienteering, reading sign, etc. — isn't woodsmanship in itself, but woodcraft. Woodsmanship is knowing when, where, and how to employ those skills, and the woodsman is the seasoned practitioner. I don't know at what level you begin to call a hunter or fisherman or outdoors person a woodsman, but I'd argue that he or she must have acquired at least a basic level of woodcraft and, most importantly, a passion for things wild and natural. It's that passion, after all, which drives us to continue learning and practicing.

So what makes a woodsman? Is it knowledge? How about skill in a particular area? I'd say no on both counts because woodsmanship cannot be bought in a book or taught in a classroom. Woodcraft can be taught, but woodsmanship can only be had through experience. Woodsmanship, and the title that goes with it, must be earned, paid for in blood and sweat, days in the field and nights in camp. No book or classroom can replace time spent with nature. You don't have to be a hunter to be a woodsman, though most woodsmen are. You simply need to be an astute observer and a willing student of Mother Nature's lessons. She is willing to teach, but you have to be out there to learn. Above all, the woodsman is a naturalist and a student. Woodsmanship has no upper bounds, and if a woodsman were to live with nature a hundred years he could learn something about her on his last day, just as on his first. Nature is a complex lady and there are no limits to her depth, just limits to our ability to comprehend.

Sadly, woodsmen are an endangered lot. Once upon a time, to be a hunter was to be a woodsman. Not long ago — when little boys played cowboys and Indians in the woodlot out back and idolized Disney's version of Davy Crockett — woodsmanship was still part of every family camping trip and day in the woods. Woodcraft was taught at an early age, campers slept in tents or under the stars, hunters became familiar with their quarry; woodsmanship was alive. Not so for most in this day and age, and that's a tragic loss.

So what happened? Where have all the woodsmen gone? Today, Spongebob and the Power Rangers have taken the place of Davy Crockett. There's now a subdivision where the woodlot once stood. "Campers" stay in luxury homes on wheels, complete with big screen TV,

Late season bowhunting in Idaho.

One of the author's primitive camps in the hardwood bottoms of Mississippi. Sometimes the very best camps are the ones you improvise.

X-Box 360, and satellite dishes. Some "hunters" drive their ATVs around and hope to see a critter to shoot with the latest high-tech weaponry while others pay guides to be the woodsmen. It's more convenient that way, which brings up a good point. It seems that most hunters today are more concerned with convenience and comfort than with hunting. Since when did convenience and comfort creep into a hunter's vocabulary anyway?

But I digress. Modern humanity's perceived need for these things isn't the intent of this essay. I don't want to linger on the past and present, but to offer hope for the future.

As bleak as the state of much modern hunting sometimes seems, woodsmanship, though probably not at the level it once was, remains alive in the hearts of most hunters. Most, no matter what they carry in their hand, have at least a little woodcraft tucked away in their rusty old brains. And, with more and more hunters becoming fed up with technology, there seems to be at least a trend toward more traditional and skillful ways of hunting. A lot of us have come to realize that when we set aside those crutches we've been coerced into believing we need and challenge ourselves, some of that corrosion begins to flake off, the gears begin to turn and apathy dissolves. Latent, and perhaps innate, skills are developed and sharpened. Nature is a great solvent for the gunk that clogs a hunter's head. We just need to rid ourselves of all the crap that

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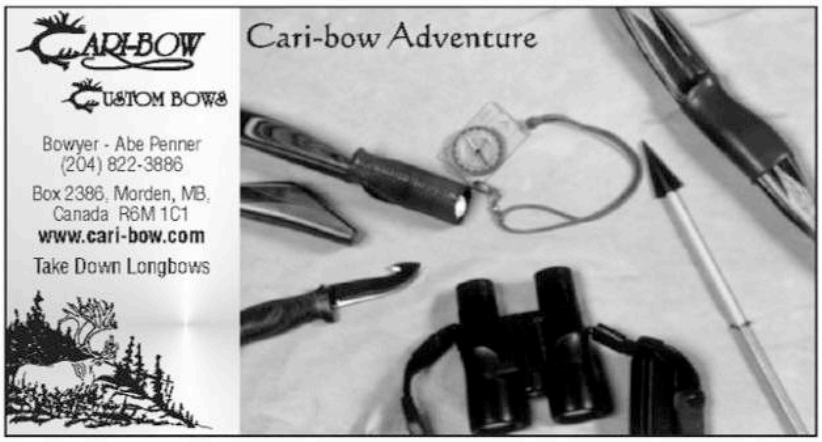
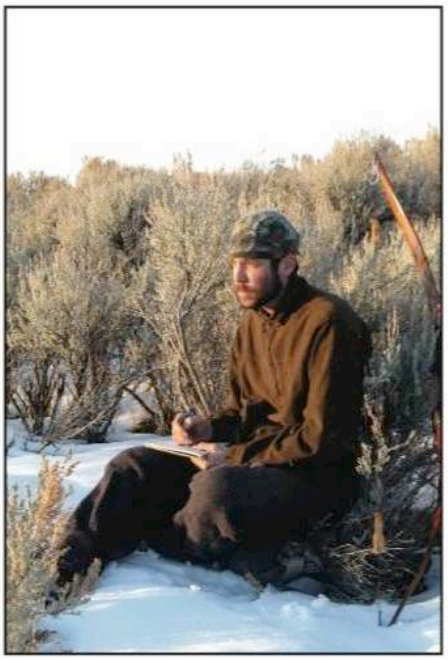


insulates us from her.

I mentioned before that woodsmanship is a continuum; it is acquired and built upon, sometimes in small subtle bits of insight and sometimes in sudden moments of enlightenment. About ten years ago, I began making and hunting with wood bows and so began some of the best training I could ever imagine. There's something about traditional archery that nurtures woodsmanship. Maybe it's the slower pace and simplicity such weapons demand that direct our attention to the seemingly little things in nature and ourselves. Perhaps the type of people traditional bowhunting attracts are just more inclined to take notice.

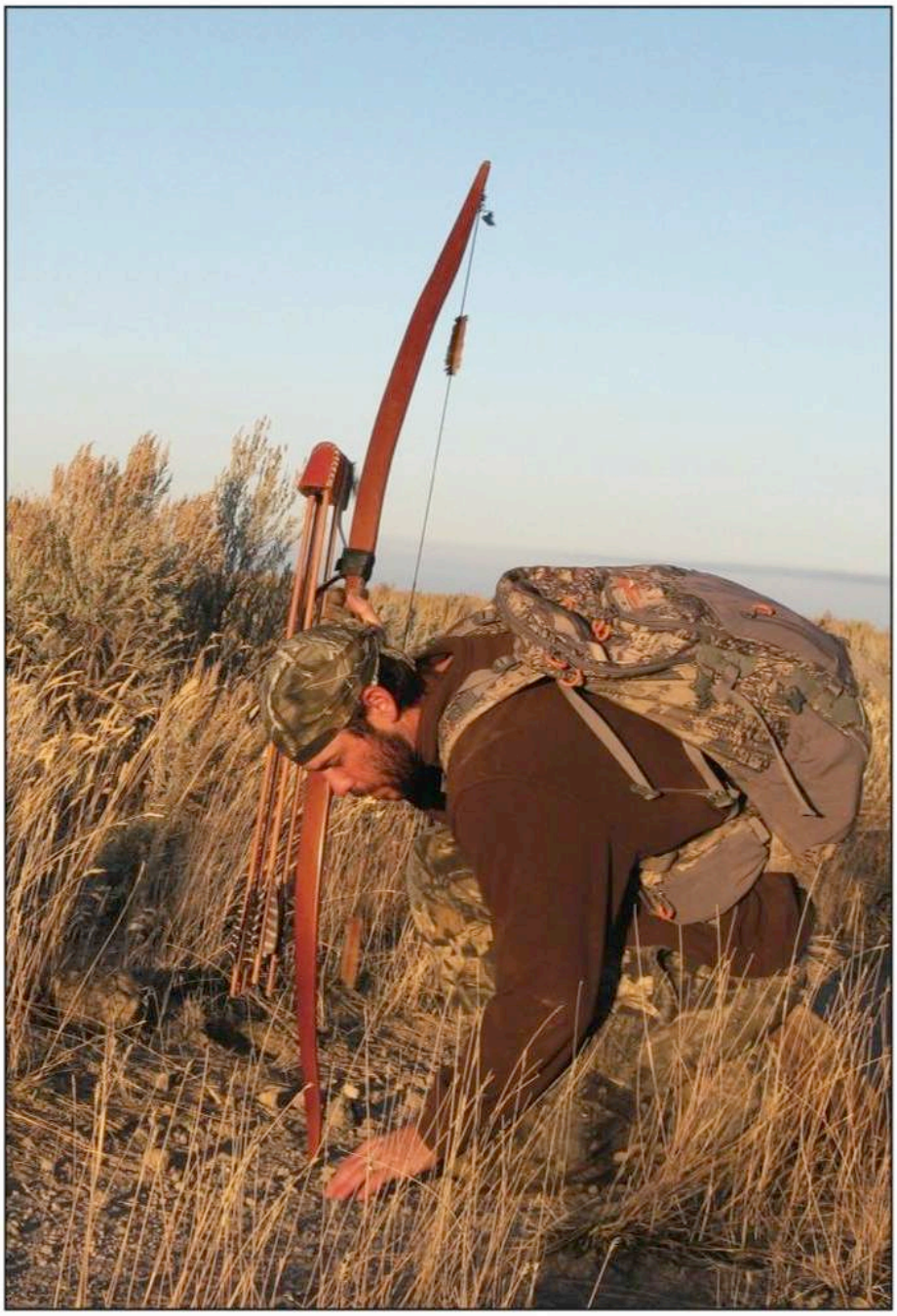
That could be part of it, but I have another theory. I think it's the simple fact that we're often able to spend the entire season chasing game around the forest with little risk of having to pack meat (well, me anyhow). Long after the compound guys have come and gone, lugging those cumbersome antlers down the trail (oh how I pity them), we're still out there, sneaking, watching, trying like hell to close the distance. Had I hunted with a compound this past elk season, I probably could have killed that raghorn that came into the wallow on opening weekend, or one of the three cows that walked past me the second, or any of the several other animals I had in range. But then I wouldn't have been out there on the last weekend. I wouldn't have felt the excitement of calling in a 45-inch Shiras bull moose to ten yards. I wouldn't have been there to sit out a thunderstorm on the lee side of a windswept ridge, trying to keep my rawhide-backed bow dry. I would never have played a half-hour game of cat and mouse with two mulie does in the snowbrush, thinking they were elk, and I couldn't have added those little pearls of insight to my woodsmanship stash. It's often the little things, the seemingly unimportant tidbits that make all the difference.

On another, more recent, adventure I had one of those big "Ah-ha!" moments that we all experience from time to time. I was on a spot and stalk hunt for black bears and was having a difficult time spotting anything to stalk. All the



Keeping a field journal is a great way to remember observations and time in the field.

research I'd done on fall bears said to concentrate on berry patches. I tried that for the first two days and wasn't able to find much in the way of berries or bears. In all of my reading and research, I hadn't come across anything that said what to do in a drought year when the berry crop was in the toilet. Figuring out what to do would take an adaptive approach and time in the woods. While driving out Sunday evening, I found the answer and gained a little ground on the woodsmanship scale. I was headed home when a bear stood up in a meadow just off the shoulder of the Forest Service road. After the little blackie headed for safer ground I walked out to where she had been and discovered she'd been digging roots in the moist soil. I pulled out my stack of topo maps and marked every little meadow like the one where the bear had been. I changed my strategy and started stalking these little meadows from downwind, checking them for bears. Over the next eight days I saw eight more bears and seven of them were in meadows like the one the little blackie had shown me on that fortuitous Sunday evening. If I hadn't been flexible and learned the lessons that nature offered, I would probably have finished the season with an unfilled tag.



No other art brings together so much acquired knowledge and skill as does tracking and reading sign, the embodiment of woodsmanship.

But I was flexible. I learned and adapted and eventually found myself at full draw, five yards from my bear.

Even though woodsmanship has waned in recent decades, and is being constantly undermined by a gizmo-marketing outdoor industry, it's far from dead. Thanks to those blessed souls who honor the old ways, woodsmanship will remain a part of who we are as hunters. We will continue to learn and practice, teach and sharpen. And hopefully, when we gain a little on that sliding scale, we'll see fit to pass along a few of those tidbits of knowledge to help the next generations decipher those novels in nature.

Clay lives in eastern Idaho with his wife and their baby boy. In addition to bowhunting, his interests include flyfishing and videography.

50th Reunion

By Cliff Dale

Rod, my barber, drives a red pickup with "Tradbow" as his commemorative license plate. His ten years of chair-side conversations, when not involved with "Husker" football, have often centered on archery hunting. He didn't really belittle the compound bow that I adopted in 1985 when elk hunting became my major focus, but his enthusiasm for traditional hunting rekindled old feelings from my bowhunting past. My "recurve rebirth" was to begin with a 50 year reunion with two major participants, but the background really began many years ago with my first archery hunt.

I've rarely told the story of my first archery deer hunt for reasons that will be obvious as 50 year-old memories revive. Al, a small town teacher just like me whose real name will not be mentioned to protect an accessory, was aware I had been into bows and arrows in my youth. From bows made from my father's engineering laths to tree limbs, it seems archery always held a fascination for me. At the time however, my primary outdoor activity besides high school coaching centered on pointing dogs and upland bird hunting. I finally succumbed to Al's offer and agreed to take advantage of a relatively new Nebraska archery deer season. I didn't own a bow, but Al provided me with a solid glass bow and two wood arrows, one of which had only two fletches. Al dropped me off under the cover of darkness, and I followed the edge of a milo field to a natural stand where one trunk of a double trunked tree had been cut off about three feet above the ground. Just as a grey dawn began to break, a young buck approached along the milo and veered onto a path that could bring him broadside past my stand at ten yards.

Hoping the statute of limitations has lapsed, I now confess that I stood on that stump with an arrow strung on my bow, but no deer license. Al had convinced me I could use his permit if by chance I saw a deer. To this date, I swear I had made up my mind I would not take a shot even if such a situation did occur. Unfortunately instinct won, and I watched the fletched arrow fly over the deer. The young buck, however, dropped in its tracks. Later analysis showed a broad head imbedded completely through a neck vertebra and the broken-off arrow lying several yards past the deer.

I made my way to Al's location, told him the news, and watched his face pale. A few minutes before, he almost had a chance to shoot a deer too. Two dead deer, two local schoolteachers, one license … that would have created quite a scandal. The deer went to town and drew spectators, and a picture appeared in the local newspaper headlined, "*First Deer Taken with a Bow in Jefferson County Since the Indians*". Al harvested a beautiful ten-pointer the next year. I bought a bow and offered to claim the 10-pointer so Al could use my license to get another. Al chose the big deer, and a new Pearson Stallion and I became close friends for the next ten years.

During that time, the Pearson bow worked hard to make me a bowhunter. Treestands consisted of unstable platforms made of wood scraps with large nails for steps. Camouflage clothing

The author's first deer, taken in 1959.

Ben Pearson ad, circa 1959.

The author's bows: Bear Super Kodiak, and Pearson Stallion.

meant military fatigues carried over from Army service. If chances occurred as a result of group drives, shots were mortar launches at running deer. But archery hunting was fun and we were learning. Deer numbers were increasing, and any success had a special flavor. At the end of ten years, the Stallion found a new owner as my son, Jeff, became old enough to qualify for a deer license. At the same time I invested in a bow that many thought was about the most beautiful ever produced — a Bear Super Kodiak. For the next 40 years, the Kodiak cast arrows at deer and turkeys and served as my backup bow for a Bear Alaskan and two different Hoyts on elk hunts. In the meantime, the Stallion collected a first deer for Jeff before college, a business startup, and family put an indefinite postponement on his archery hunting.

I hope you can imagine as I'm telling this story just how many misty recollections have emerged out from the memory of a 77 year-old. Many of those fragmentary episodes concern the challenges derived from reliance on an instrument developed and fine tuned over centuries. Whether my rebirth as a

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traditional archer happened as a result of my barber's stealth or just the reflections of age, the reunion commenced.

First, I relocated the Pearson at its last resting place in the crowded, dusty storage attic above a garage. The moldy string, complete with brush buttons and rubber finger tabs, was unstrung but intact enough to judge the appropriate length of its replacement. The dust and grime accumulated over 30 years of moving and less than desirable storage created the need for a major clean up. In the end, with the help of a son-in-law's muscle, a replacement string was attached. We checked the limbs for warping, and Jeff sent a first arrow dead center through a leaf targeted on a side hill in the yard. The Stallion and Kodiak had also been located for the reunion. A vintage Bear snap-on quiver was added to the Pearson, and feather fletched old Super Slam 2317 aluminum arrows became temporary ammunition.

I'm sure the decision to replace my compound with a recurve is not unique among traditional hunters. Aging mellows us and makes us more reflective about our previous experiences. The response of my middle-aged son as he received his resurrected bow had to be one of the most rewarding moments in my life. Jeff had never believed a compound was something he needed. In my case, even though I used a compound to harvest a couple of bulls, the process felt mechanical. In addition, I had never changed from being a fingers shooter. The peripheral vision and quickness of the traditional approach had never been adequately replicated with the mechanics of pulleys and gears.

As this article is being completed, the archery season in Nebraska has begun, and the reunion of two old bows has insured a re-emergence of cherished values of the past.

Cliff is a retired school administrator living in Lincoln, Nebraska. He has improved the habitat of his 120-acre farm with native grasses and tree planting. His son, Jeff, also now lives in Lincoln and is the President of Wireless Site Services, Inc.

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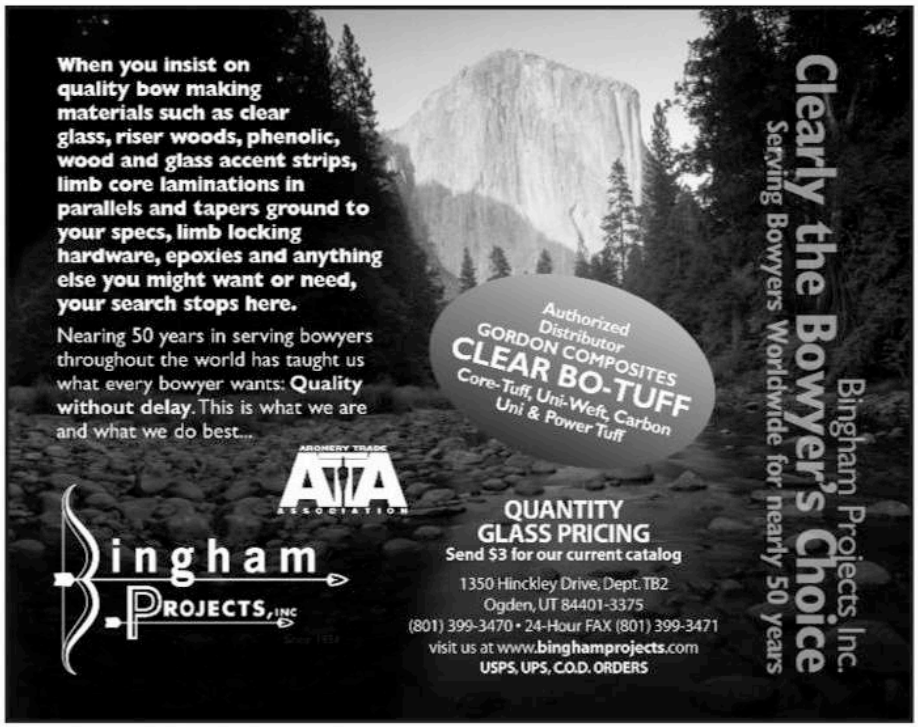

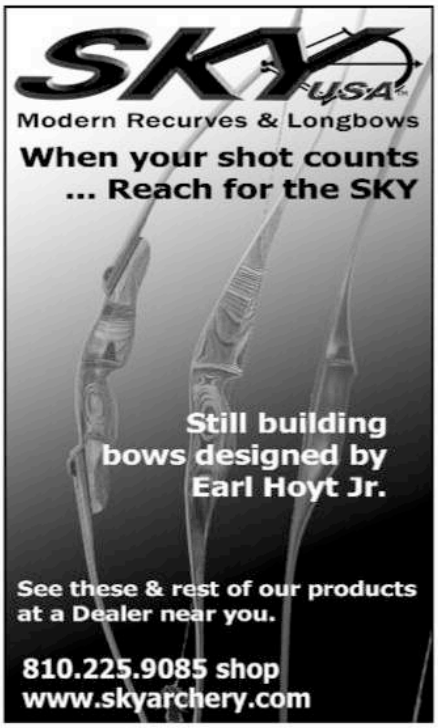

The Between Time

By Nathaniel Paull

It had been a short stalk. That's the way it sometimes happens. One moment it's just a walk in the woods, sometimes on a trail or an old road, looking at color as fall's palette blushes. The next there's a noise, a patch of soft brown just slightly out of place. Your skin tightens, and the game has changed.

Truth be told, there was nothing subtle about the cow moose's appearance. One minute there was nothing but the rustle of dying New Hampshire leaves and the gurgle of a slow creek in muddy brush, and the next she crashed into view with the grace of a Panzer, upwind and quartering away on the overgrown logging road. A few steps cleared twigs from my shooting lane as I nocked an arrow. She turned to look at me over her shoulder.

I don't remember drawing and I don't remember the release, but the image of the arrow arcing out and disappearing in that charcoal flank remains indelible. Then the moose turned and trotted away into the thicket as though nothing had happened.

Now I am here again, in that unique intermission during the hunt known best by bowhunters, when the shot has been made but the hunt remains far from over. After the shot but before the recovery. The between time.

I hear the birds more loudly and feel the wind cold on my cheek as I strain to listen. The woods around me look different somehow, each feature sharper and more important as I try to remember everything about the shot. The streak of the arrow plays over in my head again as I stand recovering my breath. My

The author, savoring the end of the "between time."

The author and his brother examine a map after the shot.

heart pounds hot blood to my face.

My surroundings feel strange as my brain struggles to recall those fleeting seconds in the moose's presence. It is as though the forest has swallowed not just the cow as she slipped away, but the very memory of her passing. Here and distinct, and then gone like a ship in fog.

Her tracks are here though, and tracks never lie to the astute reader. Sharp and deep in the soft loam, spattered and explosive in mud, the tale of her passing remains written clearly. Tracks are the language of the between time, tracks and blood, the words of stories we always hope are short and boring, absent any embellishment of good literature.

Only here, on the frosted yellow grass and mottled dead leaves, I can see no blood anywhere. And the tracks fade before my eyes as the cow crossed to hard ground already inscribed with the passage of thousands of moose before her.

There is only one right move, the oldest play in the game of predator and prey, the essence of the between time. I withdraw, and I wait.

I walk back and meet up with my father and brother and tell them the story. We wait together. I diagram the shot, and we analyze angles and anatomy. We look at maps and try to predict the moose's likely route of travel. We eat and drink water and watch the clock and the glow of an oblique sun sliding behind a curtain of high cloud. As we wait, we weigh our options.

The cow had been close and quartering, and the arrow bit deeply, to the fletching. The height was right, the placement maybe a touch far back. It seemed good. But if there is one emotion that characterizes the between time, it is anxiety, and mine runs high as we wait. There are so many variables, so many possible scenarios, and the dizzying webs they spin run through my mind as minutes drag on. And there is no blood.

Finally it comes time to act, to explore, at least initially. We slip back down the overgrown road. I point out where the cow stopped, the sloppy mud where she crashed back into the thicket, and the high, frozen grass where the trail assumes a pattern that exceeds our skills.

The edges of the drainage slope away softly miles to either side of us, swaths of pine punctuated with the ochre and crimson of beech and alder. I feel acutely the crushing weight of the country's expanse. A ruffed grouse thumps away in the distance. We spread out.

We find the fletched end of the arrow first, and it looks good. Tongues of frothy pink and red spiral down the maple shaft and onto the first few inches of fletching. Encouraging, but it is still the only sign of the cow's passage. Slowly, painstakingly, we look for more.

A thousand theories run through my head during the between time, a thousand stories, tips, and reminders. It's as though everything I've learned about

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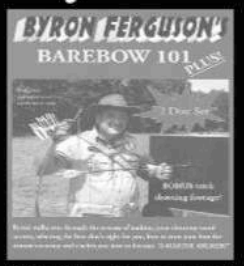

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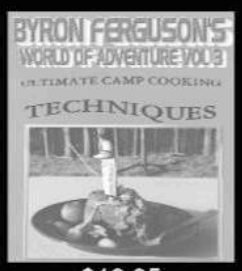

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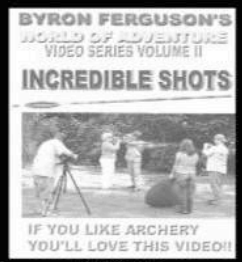

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wildlife competes for recognition. *They head to water*, memory reminds, but I recall too the stories with the moral: *but not always. They'll go downhill*, or *they'll head into thick brush*, but what if the two are in opposite directions? *Get on your knees if necessary,* and *don't forget to look for blood sign high in the brush*. In the end it's a guess-and-check process.

I play the shot over and over in my head. Did I see it wrong? Did I forget to do something? Are we out here too soon? The right questions for an ethical hunter but the wrong questions for a predator during the between time. On the trail, there is really only one question: *Where do I look next?*

My eyes latch onto each leaf, each spot of red or fungus brown eating its way through autumn's yellow. I touch them; none are blood spots. I raise my face to the sky and breathe deeply through flared nostrils, as though perhaps in this time of need ancient senses can be awakened to fulfill ancient needs. But the air I pull into the growing pit in my chest carries nothing but pitch and frost to my nose. I think about coyotes.

We have been searching for less than an hour, but the lack of sign does not equate with lack of purpose, and each new minute feels intense and precious. I calm myself with simple mantras. O*ne step at a time. The moose has not gone anywhere I cannot follow. I will find it.* Then there is a word spoken in my father's voice. He has said nothing but my name, but the way he says it, the focused intensity, the restrained urgency, conveys much more. Stepping high over tussocks, I jog toward him.

He is poised in a thicket with an arrow nocked, his gaze fixed ahead of him. He stands rock steady. Between us, prostrate and still, lies the cow. Anxiety fades. A glow of satisfaction spreads, and a unique air of quiet respect and elation permeates the scene as we approach slowly.

We are less than 50 yards from the spot where I first saw the moose. Later, we will learn that the shot was as perfect as can be, the chest transected in a precise diagonal and full of blood. Later, we will try to reconstruct how the moose moved after the shot, and we will shake our heads at having waited six hours to conclude an event that probably occurred in six seconds. Later, we will watch the first of the winter stars come up over the ridge and know for the first time the taste of moose meat. We know none of that now, not yet.

As I lay my hand on the massive shoulder, we know but one thing. The between time is over.

Nathaniel Paull is a 4th year medical student at the University of Washington School of Medicine. He has been bowhunting since the age of eight.

Equipment Note

On this hunt, the author carried a 55# Wes Wallace longbow and maple shafts tipped with Zwickey Delta heads.

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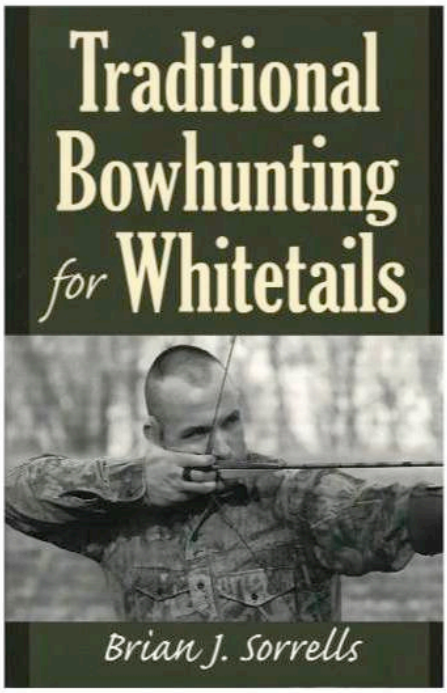

Book Review

Traditional Bowhunting for Whitetails

By Brian J. Sorrells

ISBN#: 978-8117-3308-3

Reviewed by Jason R. Wesbrock

If you're looking for a book that claims to crack the code with respect to killing monster whitetail bucks, this isn't it. That's not necessarily a bad thing. It seems these days most how-to whitetail hunting books are written from the standpoint of trophy hunting as opposed to simply deer hunting — at times a fine distinction, I'll admit. With his book, *Traditional Bowhunting for Whitetails*, Brian J. Sorrells speaks to those wishing to hunt whitetail deer in general, not necessarily trophy bucks. The author makes this point abundantly clear during the book's introduction:

"... this book's focus will not be on how to hunt trophy white-tailed bucks. Enough books already cover that subject. And, if you read far enough, you'll learn of my true feelings about trophies in general."

What follows are twelve well laid out chapters on everything from equipment selection to whitetail anatomy, scouting and hunting techniques, to game processing from field to table. There is certainly no shortage of how-to books on the market for whitetail hunters, but this particular volume does a better than average job of covering a wide array of basic information. The hunting information contained in this book is well suited to the beginning whitetail enthusiast, while offering a tip or two for the seasoned veteran.

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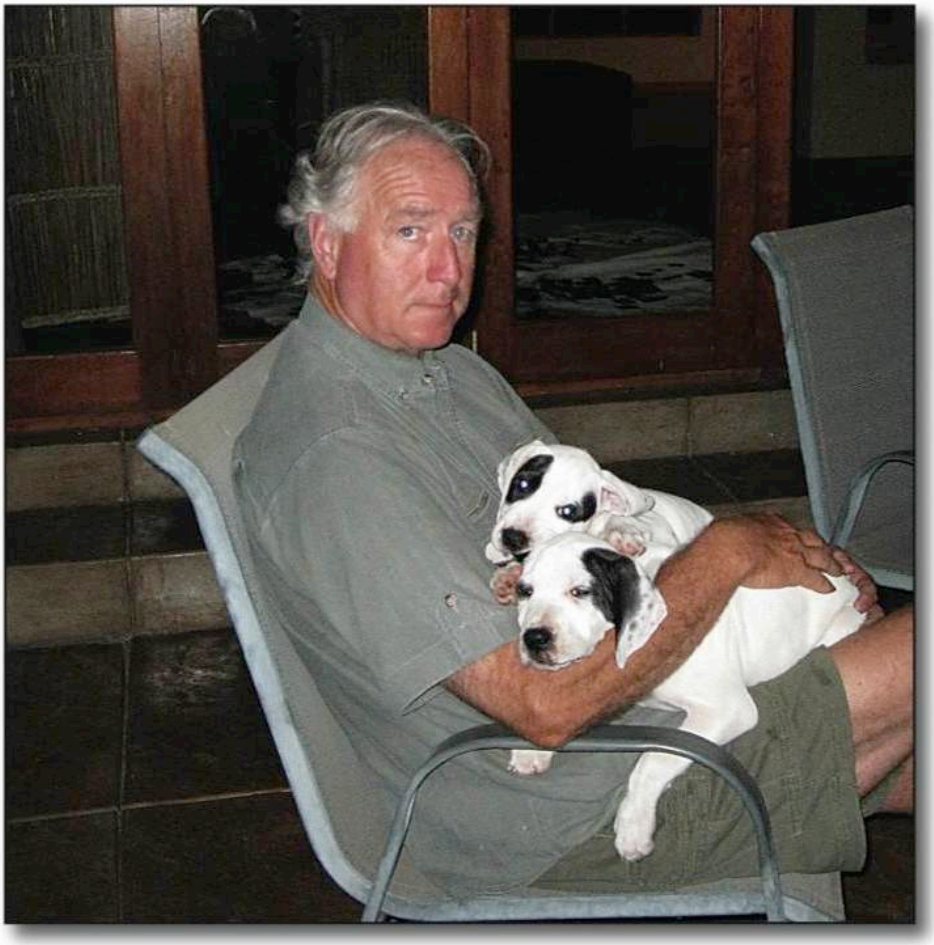
Tips From the Old Timer

By Dennis Kamstra



For dog lovers — I've raised a lot of dogs in my life and I have only recently discovered that it is much easier to raise two pups (from same litter) than just one. They socialize together and expend all their energy on each other instead of the owner! Instead of extra effort, two pups are actually less work than one.

If you want to secure gear on your hunting vehicle, try using strips of rubber inner tube. A few wraps with these strips and completed with a couple of half hitches will be much more secure than tying with rope or bungee cord. Even the heaviest gear will not rattle once secured with these rubber strips. Besides being effective, you can't beat the price.

If you ever consider buying or making a 4x4 trailer, think about using the same size tires/wheels as you run on the pulling vehicle. This way you will have interchangeable spares. Also, if you purchase any custom wheels for your hunting rig, remember to keep the original wheels so you can mount spare tires on them. This is cheaper than buying a custom 5th wheel as a spare, plus you will have four spare wheels instead of one.

When you purchase a Swiss Army Knife or multi-tool, remember to buy one with a saw blade. I can't tell you how many times you will use it. Trimming limbs around a tree stand or ground blind and splitting the pelvis while gutting game are only a few uses that make them invaluable. I have found that wire saws are compact and great in theory but they will break if kinked or the finger ring will break off. The quality of a large (4-inch) saw blade on a Swiss Army Knife is exceptional and will remain sharp for years.

Always carry a small note pad and pencil with you while hunting (not ink pen as they do not write well if paper becomes wet). While on a hunt, you will think of several things you wish you would have brought with you and these handy items will slip your mind once you return home. Best to jot these things down as they come to mind. You might need to write notes to your hunting partner, record compass bearings and GPS coordinates, mileage readings off your odometer. Believe me, as you grow older you will forget more and more. Keep these lists of things you wish you would have brought with you so when you pack for your next hunt, you can refer to them.

Before you depart the construction of a treestand or ground blind, be sure to drag the entire area with a tree limb to erase all tracks. This will allow you to ascertain any fresh tracks since your last visit. Do this every time you leave your stand (both morning and evening) and it will serve as a poor man's Trail Cam.

I've tried about every type of face camouflage on the market and have a few recommendations. A full face net is a must when you expect serious bug populations (spring bear hunts especially). The down side of a full face net is that they can make vision difficult especially when full sunlight strikes the net. If you cut eyeholes in a full-face net

or rubberized face nets, you will nullify it as a bug protector. Hole cuts will also tend to move as you come to full draw, which will disrupt your concentration when aiming. For best all purpose use, I prefer face camo paint. You need not get carried away with several different colors or try to cover every square inch of your face. Wide, diagonal stripes of plain black camo paint will work fine. Try to make these black lines go right up to and below each eyeball. About 5 wide black stripes will suffice. As I've stated before (in previous issues), the pattern of color on the African Wild Dog is nature's finest camouflage and something we should try to emulate. Also, you might want to experiment with the different types of face paint. Some face paint will run when your face sweats and others will be very difficult to remove. What ever you choose, you must camouflage your face, as it will be a dead giveaway if you don't. One last comment on face nets — if you choose to hunt with them, you must practice with them! Your "feel" and concentration will be affected, so you need to get used to it.

Choosing a pair of binoculars can be a daunting chore. There are several factors to consider (power, weight, waterproofing, size, and cost). I spent the money years ago to purchase a quality pair of Leitz binoculars. I've been using them for 40 years and they have served me well, but they have one downside that drives me nuts — the individual ocular focus knob cannot be locked in position and requires constant adjustment during the day. Later models have a locking function that will allow for a one-time focus (for left and right eye) so the only thing required is the distance focusing. This is just another thing to consider when purchasing binoculars, but one that has become very important to me. Many times I have only a few seconds to observe game before it runs off and I don't have time to re-focus these individual oculars. I needed to purchase a new pair of binos for my wife recently, so I researched all the major models (thinking that perhaps I would be allowed to use them from time to time). For what it is worth, I chose Swarovski EL 8.5 x 42, 7.4 degrees, rubber coated. I'm very impressed by the innovations made in the past 40 years. These binoculars have everything I require for everyday use. Probably one of the biggest decisions was to get a lower power (8.5) instead of the 10-power of my Leitz. The shaking of the 10-power glass makes it difficult to use "free handed". In fact, I almost got the 7 x 42 for this very reason. I hope these observations are helpful to any readers facing a purchase that may well be once in a lifetime.

If you are considering a hunt that will require international travel, consider a takedown bow that can be placed in your normal luggage along with your arrows (without broadheads). Hard-sided bow cases are great but they encourage inquiry by customs officials as well as the attention of thieves. Remember, bowhunting equipment need not be declared as do firearms, and so DON'T declare them. Many foreign customs inspectors and baggage clerks will assume your archery gear needs to be handled the same as firearms which necessitates special permits and costs associated with these permits. If an X-ray of your luggage promotes an inquiry, simply state that it is archery gear and not firearms. Of course the airline restrictions may change and each airline has their individual rules pertaining to hunting equipment, but for now it is focused only on firearms. If you intend to bring a rifle as well as bow hunting gear, go through the trouble to go on the web site of the airline you are traveling with and print out the rules pertaining to firearms and carry them with you to the airport. In fact, I recommend that you make a trip to your local international airport before your actual departure date and reconfirm all aspects of the airlines firearms policy in person with a "supervisor agent" (and get their name). Remember, you may be flying on two or three different airlines (domestic American airlines, an international airline, and a domestic airline in the country you will be hunting) and each may have different rules. Do your research so there are no surprises. One more thing concerning airlines and luggage — many domestic airlines are charging for each piece of luggage checked as well as restricting the weight on each checked bag. If you are connecting to an international flight the domestic airlines should honor the size, number and weight restrictions of the international carrier which are generally much more liberal. If all this is confusing, just e-mail me and I will walk you through it all (safariden@aol.com).

The Campfire Philosopher

By David Petersen

Truth ... Or Consequences?

"Keith, I lied to you."

It was the second week of January and I was camped on public land along the Mexican border in Arizona, enjoying the hunting tutelage and chef-quality wild-game cookery of fellow graybeard Greg Munther. Notwithstanding he's from Montana, Greg is the best desert whitetail hunter I know.

On my only previous Coues hunt, down in the Boot Heel of New Mexico, I'd misspent most of my time sneaking around and seen only one buck in a week of hunting. Now, thanks to Greg, I'd learned to focus on ambushing stock ponds, or "tanks" as they're known throughout the West. After several days of exploration and experimentation I'd found a tank that lured in at least one nice buck most days, plus lots of javelina (which I don't hunt but love to watch). I'd had two shots from 20 yards and shot over the backs of both 8-point bucks. Yes, they are smallish targets, but that wasn't the problem. The problem was that I'd switched to lighter arrows for deer but hadn't practiced enough with them to overcome my deeply engrained mental tuning to elk-weight missiles and their trajectory. Should I get another shot, I'd remember to aim lower.

So it was that things were going along well enough until one afternoon when I was driving back toward camp and met another pickup creeping toward me on the bumpy dirt road. Recognizing the driver as a fellow bowhunter, I rolled down my window to exchange greetings.

"Howdy," I said. "I'm Dave. Remember me?"

"Dave who?" the other hunter asked, his brow slightly wrinkled.

"Petersen."

"I've heard that name," he said, smiling. "I'm Keith Chastain."

"I've heard that name," I responded.

Although he hadn't recognized my pretty face, I remembered Keith from a Colorado Traditional Archer's Society shoot a couple of years previous. Keith, a long-tall fellow by any stretch, is known for his gregarious nature and Chastain bows, designed especially for long-draw shooters.

It soon became clear that Keith had gotten scent of "my" Coues pond and was out scouting for it. Panicked at that realization, when he asked if I'd seen any tanks where I'd just come from, I heard myself saying: "No, just more lousy road all the way to Mexico."

"Hmmm," Keith responded, checking his map. "Well, thanks and good hunting."

With that we headed our separate ways. But not very far in my case before I impulsively braked, turned around, chased Keith down, got out and walked up to his window. "Forget something?" he asked.

"Keith, I lied to you. I pride myself on being an honest man and I have to 'fess up."

I then told him about the pond and explained that I had only two days left to hunt and would he mind holding off until I was done.

"No problem."

And that was that. Happy ending. Except of course for the harsh self-examination I'm still receiving, a year later, from my nagging conscience.

Anyone who claims never to lie is a liar and with that proviso firmly in mind I do not claim never to lie, but only that I long ago came to a point where I realized that lying not only left me with a nasty guilt hangover but was generally counterproductive as well. Consequently, with occasional lapses as noted, I find it easy to go with the truth. Yet I'm left to wonder: Had it been a stranger looking to encroach on my Coues honey hole rather than someone I figured I might someday encounter again, would I have felt compelled to come clean? I can't truthfully say.

In the big picture, it seems fair to presume that most of us who hunt in this increasingly overcrowded world of shrinking opportunities have been or someday will be tempted to lie to a fellow hunter in "justifiable self defense." And so the philosophic question at hand is this: As honest men and women, how should we handle hunting situations that tempt us to lie? Is it worth it to protect a spot that another hunter has as much legal right to as we do? To further complicate the question, what if we know the encroacher to be a low-down dirty dog of an unethical hunter. Does that license us to lie in good conscience to protect the resource as well as our personal interests?

With Keith Chastain, an honorable man, truth easily won the day. But hunters are human and you know those odds. What would you do in a similar fix? Like so many ethical questions arising from hunting today, the only truthful answer here may be: "Well, it depends."

David Petersen may be fibbing when he claims to be the more "handsome and charismatic" half of ***TBM's*** *two-Dave Campfire Philosopher team. He is, however, truthfully the author of* A Man Made of Elk *and several more (www.davidpetersenbooks.com).*

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