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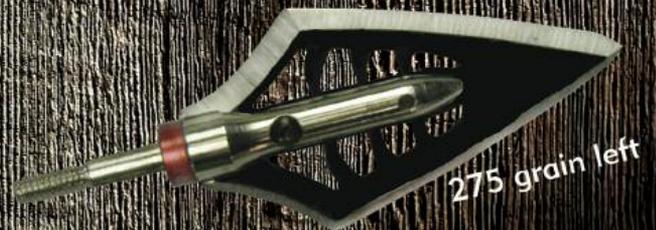
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A Look Inside

Vol. 27, No. 5

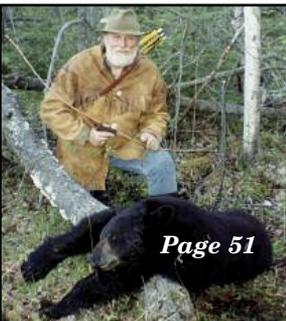
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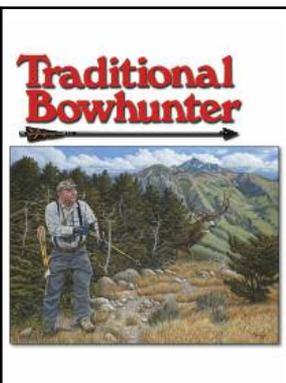
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Original artwork by Raymond W. Koehler, Jr.





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Editor/Publisher/Founder
T.J. Conrads • tjc@tradbow.com

Advertisement Manager
Kerri Doyle • kerri@tradbow.com

Co-Editor
E. Donnell Thomas, Jr. • thomasdon@me.com

Shooting Editor
G. Fred Asbell

Campfire Philosophers
Jason R. Wesbrock, Krista & Sterling Holbrook

Contributors
Nathan L. Andersohn • Billy Berger
Jerry Gowins, Jr. • Kirby Kohler
Dennis Kamstra • Duncan Pledger
Darryl Quidort • Brian Sorrells
Denny Sturgis Jr. • David Tetzlaff
Lori Thomas • Wayne van Zwoll

Subscription Information • Amanda Nydegger
subscriptions@tradbow.com
P.O. Box 519, Eagle, ID 83616
Toll Free: 888-828-4882 • Phone: 208-383-9019

Editorial Information
P.O. Box 519, Eagle, Idaho 83616 • 208-383-0982

Advertising and Classified Information
Kerri Doyle • kerri@tradbow.com
P.O. Box 519, Eagle, ID 83616
Phone: 208-853-0555 • Fax: 208-383-9010

Advertising Sales Representatives
• Mark Viehweg • mark@tradbow.com
Phone: 847-828-4413
• David Balowski • david@tradbow.com
Phone: 517-317-4101

Fax: 208-383-9010

Webmaster/Online Advertising
Robin Conrads • webmaster@tradbow.com
208-939-0383

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Editor's Note

Mentoring the Next Generation

Over the last several years sitting in archery/bowhunting board meetings, participating in club functions and shoots, and speaking to several archery/bowhunting organizations, I have noticed a disturbing trend among the bowhunting fraternity; the majority of us are getting older, and there are too few women and the younger generation following in our footsteps. According to the US Fish and Wildlife, although hunter numbers are rising slowly after several years of decline, that number is only around 13.7 million people, representing less than 7% of the population.

Our latest survey, which had an overwhelming response, gave a wealth of information about our readers, one of which was their age. The survey showed that 28% of our readers are between 51-60-years old, while 52% are 60-years and older. This parallels what other studies show, and that is while hunter numbers are increasing, the weakest growth is in the youth sector.

It's important that we introduce the simplicity and thrill of traditional archery to everyone. Many of us have taught our children, spouses, or neighbors' kids about archery and how to shoot a bow. Many clubs have youth programs as well, and one of them is the Compton Traditional Bowhunters.

For the past sixteen years, Compton has held its Rendezvous at the Berrien Springs Sportsman's Club in Michigan the third weekend in June. Compton has always been about getting youth and women involved with not only archery, but bowhunting as well. Each year they have special events for youth, teaching archery to groups ranging from 100 to 150. This year, Vince Smith, Compton Youth Education Chairman, and Floyd Wells, who together run the Youth Programs for the Rendezvous, along with Compton volunteers, taught 150 young people to shoot the bow and arrow. The three age groups were Pee Wee (35+ students), Pre Teens (82 students), and Teens (33 students). There are also special, supervised ranges for the kids to shoot, and Compton has a program where they donate bows and arrows to groups for youth training. Around 5,000 people attend the Rendezvous, as it is promoted as a family event. It's one of the largest traditional shoots in the States, and grows every year.

Mentoring women, children, and young adults is something needed if we are to build leaders in archery and bowhunting for the future. It's something that doesn't take a lot of time or money, and is quite rewarding. If you are teaching your kids about archery and the outdoors, that's great. I have childless friends who are in the Big Brothers and Big Sisters organizations and have introduced many youth to archery, fishing, and the outdoors.

Archery and bowhunting need new and energetic leaders. As I look in the mirror, I see a man who has had a passion for the bow and arrow since he was a very young man. He is older and grayer these days, but still has that passion to go out into the outdoors, longbow in hand, to stalk the forests, smell the clean air, and enjoy fresh coffee around a fire on early, foggy hunting mornings. I'm sure you do, too. We need to pass this love along to the next generation of leaders, and show them how simple and rewarding traditional archery, and bowhunting, can be.

T.J. Conrads

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Letters to the Editor

Dear **TBM**,

In response to Leif Carrfors' letter (*Letters, Jun/Jul 2016*), I researched Sweden's "Right of Public Access" and discovered that the Swedish regulations do not apply to hunting in that country. I applaud the Swedes for prohibiting the positing of private property from other activities, such as walking camping, hiking, bicycling and most other outdoor activities, while at the same time protecting private landowners from severe intrusion in close proximity to their actual habitations. I believe such regulations might only be possible in areas of relatively low human population densities.

I am very thankful that former conservation minded leaders in Pennsylvania were able to convince political leaders that large areas of forested land should be held by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania in the form of Pennsylvania State Game Lands, Pennsylvania State Forests, the Allegheny National Forest and the Pennsylvania State Parks. As a hunter, I am also very happy that the Pennsylvania Game Commission and Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission continually make efforts to provide hunter access to millions of acres of privately held property through their "Cooperative Hunting Access" programs. Again, I believe that many of these efforts are only successful in

areas where overall human population densities are relatively low.

Gary Moser
Brookville, PA

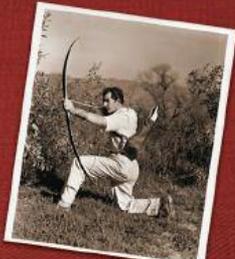
Dear **TBM**,

I was just reading my Apr/May 2016 edition of **Traditional Bowhunter Magazine** (love the magazine!) and just had to let you know that your article editorial "Who's Neglecting Their Kids" touched me deeply. I grew up in northern New York state, specifically Ogdensburg, New York and, at my current age of 53 and being father, I couldn't agree with you more.

When we grew up we found "entertainment" in the forests and farm fields of our properties, as well as our neighbors' properties, and it was NOT sitting in front of a computer screen! Traps (leg-hold and Conibear), fly rods, old recurve bows with 2-3 arrows, etc., was our entertainment. The core values of appreciation stood out to us as youngsters in a blessed area, rich with game and fish. Today, kids seem so neglected by parents who allow iPads and television to be babysitters. It's truly pitiful, and I'm glad to be 53 years old and not parenting anymore.

Your editorial really hit home with me and I just wanted

What would Howard be hoping for this holiday season?
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Howard Hill

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to express my appreciation for your thoughts to the readers whom, like me, still remember those great years when kids could be safe in their backyards or neighbors' backyards.

Mark Logan
Watertown, NY

Dear TBM,

I truly enjoyed the article on Howard Hill in the *Jun/Jul 2016* issue. When I was a young boy, my older brother drove me out to Howard Hill's archery shop so I could buy my first bow. It was a real adventure that I, to this day, have memories of.

I had been reading every article, newspaper story, and book, and watched Robin Hood three times. Then I saved all my earnings from my newspaper route so I could buy that first bow and arrows, which just had to be a Howard Hill bow!

When I first met Howard, all I could do was gawk at him. I must have been eleven- or twelve-years old. Howard fitted me to a bow and we went out back of his shop and he showed me how to shoot it. It was all I could do just to pull it back. Howard then squeezed my arm and said, "That's alright, kid. You will grow into it." It took some time, but eventually I took to the bow as he told me I would.

When I came of age, I enlisted in the military, fulfilled my duty, and returned home to find the bow gone. It broke my heart.

Thanks for allowing me to relive those precious memories.

Mr. Franklin
Lakewood, WA

Dear TBM,

I wanted to drop you a note and let your staff know how much I appreciate **Traditional Bowhunter**. If you shoot traditional bows, this is THE magazine to read. I have always "hunted" for TBM at the local grocery store, but just recently, as a birthday gift to me, I subscribed; I don't want to miss a single issue anymore, and won't have to "hunt" for it!

Keep up the great work.

V.P. James
Deer Park, WA





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A Few Bucks for My Soul

By Lucas Strommen

Getting together with family to hunt alongside one another on Thanksgiving weekend has been a longstanding tradition in my family. I remember being too young to hunt (you have to be twelve years old in Montana) and still wanting to go out and brave the cold snow on these wonderful days with my father, my brothers, my uncles Roy and Dusty Jones, and their sons. Once in a while, friends and extended family would join us. I remember the days when the Robertsons were around more often, and Dick would let an arrow or two fly if you could talk him into standing instead of pushing or stalking. Later, a young Yote would come along to break in one of their recurves. After a day of hunting, we boys would listen to our elders' stories as they sat sipping coffee around the kitchen table or relaxing around an open fireplace that they put

to work drying out the many layers of wool and pac boots that were usually soaking wet or frozen solid from a day spent hunting along the cottonwood-covered river bottom.

I remember them talking of other parts of Montana, Alaska, and even "pioneering" bowhunting into Russia's interior upon the collapse of the Soviet Union. I remember thinking what a mountain of a man Doug Borland was when he would come up with Dick—and of course, he still is. I very faintly remember Jay Massey. How precious a memory that became when I grew mature enough to realize what a truly remarkable individual he was and appreciate the influence his writings

would have on my life. Men like these—Doug Borland, Paul Schafer, Jay Massey, Dick Robertson—seemed larger than life to me. I never tired of hearing of their traditional hunting experiences in lands that seemed mystical to a young man.

Even back then, the issues of compound bows and crossbows versus traditional hunting equipment sparked passionate debate, as they were just seeing the horizon of the impact that technological advances were having on our bowhunting world. They knew the importance of introducing us kids to the outdoors and what Mother Nature had to offer us, as well as the importance of introducing us to traditional archery at

Above left—The author, left, and his brother Jake with their first bows: Red Bear Archery sets.

Above right—the start of a family tradition of bowhunting in Montana. Back row, the author's father, Eliot, and his uncle Roy Jones. Front row left to right are David Jones, Doug Jones, the author, and Jake.



The author with his first bowkilled, and his uncle Roy with the club-horned buck shot from the ground.

of the drive. Most of us kids were able to take our first deer with traditional bows this way. The adults were always more excited than we were when one of us boys ran a wooden arrow and a self-sharpened broadhead through the lungs of a Milk River whitetail using our recurves. To this day, I remember hearing the shouts from a hundred yards away as my dad and uncles expressed their excitement for me while I proudly and vigorously shook my Robertson Prairie Falcon above my head to indicate that I had just killed my first buck. Half an hour later, my Uncle Roy shot a gnarly, club-horned buck with his Robertson longbow that died on the same trail as mine had just minutes before, with only minutes left in the season.

I was standing just a few short yards from him when he released his Snuffer-tipped cedar arrow into that buck. We lit up the old red and green, liquid-

an early age, laying a foundation on which to continue our hunting heritage. So, they would bundle us up in warm snowsuits, scarves, and mittens and take us out so we could tag along.

to help walk the brush while they stood on the opposite ends of the cover with their longbows. If you could walk, you could go on a deer drive! Once we were old enough to hunt, the adults *always* insisted that we be on the receiving end

Actually, I think they just wanted us

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Luke with his first longbow buck taken nearly seventeen years after his first bow kill.



Growing older. Eliot Strommen, left, with the Sticker Buck, with Dave, Dusty Jones, and the author.

fueled Coleman lanterns and went to work cleaning our quarry as I learned what a good old Buck 110 folding knife was made for. I have had that classic blade since I received it for my twelfth birthday, and I will pass it on to my own kids. There were plenty of firm handshakes accompanied with heartfelt eye contact, “atta boys,” and back slapping shared among our group that remarkable evening. It seemed that I turned a page in my life that day, as if I were becoming a man. I will always remember that event.

My two brothers and I grew up doing this on a yearly basis with my two cousins Doug and Dave, their dad and our dad, and sometimes with the Robertsons and friends. We didn’t do this solely on Thanksgiving Day, but we knew that no matter what the adults would be getting together for certain then, and as young traditional bowhunters, that was an exciting event to anticipate. It seemed that most of us, adults included, were never in a rush to fill our tags earlier in the hunting season. We wanted to save them just for that particular weekend marking the

end of the season. The rush of being on the ground as whitetails either poured or eased into our shooting lanes while we held our recurves with arrows nocked and ready was truly an experience. A lot of seasons ended leaving a few or perhaps many of our tags unfilled, but as my adolescence gave way to my maturity, I began to realize that we were out there for reasons other

than just killing an animal—and the adults were out there for us kids.

As it always does, time marched on. The Robertsons lived several hours away and were busy with a growing business, a young family, and other personal priorities. For both sides of my family, spare time was spent making ends meet during periods of agricultural and economical stress, and we spent



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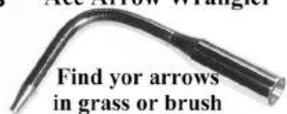
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Doug's Thanksgiving Day buck taken from the ground.

less time getting together to hunt. Hunting became more of a necessary method of supplementing an agricultural income and left inadequate time to nourish our souls with friends and family while in the woods. Kids grew up, and some of us moved away seeking opportunity or education. Some of us started families, and some of us engaged in a combination of both ventures. Life became more hectic, organized, and prioritized.

Our Thanksgiving Day hunting group grew smaller and smaller every year, until some years found the cottonwood-covered river bottoms remaining silent without our soft whistles and jubilant voices and the unpacked snow

lay void of our footprints. But it seemed that every fall brought me memories of those days when we would get together and tap the sap of life. During this period, I constantly yearned for those cold days when we piled several deep into our old GMC Jimmies, Dodge pickups, and beat up Chevy ranch trucks. Every outfit had a thermos or two full of hot chocolate or coffee that not only warmed our insides, but our hands as well. We plucked wool pants, long-sleeved shirts, and coats sporting old-school camo or plaid earth tones (this was before the numerous camouflage options we have now) from trees and fences in the yard before the morning hunt and later from the fireplace as we

headed out after turkey dinner.

Robertson longbows and trusty old Bear recurves held cedar arrows with brightly colored fletching that seemed to jut out everywhere, begging to be let loose upon the breeze. We joked and laughed and constantly ribbed one another. And we shook hands, usually right before one of us rolled up his sleeves and got his hands bloody in a steaming carcass.

As I get older, I try to make time to get back to those days so that the experience can come full circle when my own kids, nieces, and nephews become old enough to tag along. I think that is probably when the true rewards of the hunting experience are felt, when it comes full circle. When I think back to some of the deer I have taken with my recurves or longbows, my fondest memories seem to be of the ones I tagged while in good company, with the experience shared together as an accomplishment among friends. As I reflect on those days past and eagerly await the days soon to come with my own children, I am reminded of things I have learned during so many years of our Thanksgiving hunting tradition—camaraderie, woodsmanship, respect, spirituality, thankfulness, self-reflection, and perhaps more important than any other, humbleness. God willing, the tradition will carry on through me to my children, because we gain so much more than a head on the wall or meat in the freezer during those wonderful, blissful days.

Some members of our original group will forever be missed, while recent years have found our group bursting with new family and friends. Some things refuse to change, showing us that tradition is part of the circle of life. My family and our friends have been getting together more and more in recent seasons and each time we do, it

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seems to feed my soul a little more of something it has been missing regardless of whether we punch tags or not. However, there have been a handful of hunts in the last few years that have found us slotting tags with wood bows in hand. I can quickly recall a few bucks my uncles Dusty and Roy have taken, a doe my cousin Dave took, and a once-in-a-lifetime buck my dad killed after shooting it with his twenty-four year old Robertson Stykbow. That was the first arrow he had released at an animal in fifteen or so years, and let me tell you, that was good medicine for him.

A few years back on Turkey Day weekend, I harvested my first longbow buck nearly seventeen years after the fateful day I tagged my first one with a recurve. This longbow buck was actually tending a doe just yards from where my very first buck died so many years ago after it came up the same trail to me as my father nudged him just as he

had done alongside my uncles seventeen seasons earlier, when I stretched the string of my recurve and sent a Zwickey Eskimo through its lungs.

My cousin Doug took a beautiful buck on a recent Thanksgiving Day hunt while standing behind some skimpy ash trees. As I nudged some deer past his meager hideout, Doug executed a perfectly placed 16-yard shot right through the vitals of the buck, which fell less than seventy yards away. Doug used his 60-pound Robertson Peregrine recurve and an ash arrow weighing 680 grains. Nick Dulaney, my brother-in-law, was standing just a short distance from Doug and was able to experience the whole episode as it unfolded in front of him. Nick was just getting into traditional bowhunting and would soon take his first archery buck with an old Ben Pearson bow and a vintage Bear Razorhead a few days later. For him to witness and be part of

Doug's kill was special in itself. Doug was pretty excited after taking one of his best bucks by bow. The three of us exchanged firm handshakes right before Doug rolled up his sleeves and got his hands bloody.

When I reflect back on those experiences, I realize that Doug's buck and the others' were not just good traditional bow kills. They weren't just about filling tags. They were symbolic. They weren't just bucks that nurtured their souls, they were bucks for *my* soul. And I never released an arrow.

Luke Strommen was born and raised along the Milk River in North-Central Montana. He now works as a deputy sheriff when he isn't bowhunting or fishing for walleyes during the summer.



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My friends, and anyone who has followed me over my sixteen years writing for this fine magazine, know I wear my emotions on my sleeve. Starting with my first article—"The Switch" that detailed my switch from a compound to a traditional bowhunter—I do my best to tell the truth. I have never been afraid to write about my frustrations as a hunter and admit that misses are a part of some of my hunts. Don Thomas once told me that there is no other writer so willing to write about misses. I do so because I want my readers to know I'm not ashamed of my imperfections and that misses happen. I am human, unlike some hunting writers!

It's no secret that a few years ago I struggled to make consistently good shots under the pressure of a hunt. During this phase of my life, I missed several really good bucks and plenty of does. I managed to make a few good shots at good quality bucks and still fill the freezer, but I wasn't the shooter I used to be. The stress of life, faltering eyesight, and negative emotions combined to change me as an archer. The frustration was debilitating, and I contemplated quitting altogether or going back to a compound. But try as I did, I couldn't see myself in the woods with anything other than my recurve. I don't live to hunt; I hunt so I can be, and hunting with my recurve is who I am. Therefore, I had no other option but to change my shot sequence and relearn how to shoot.

For sixteen years I used the same shot sequence. I held the bow string with one finger above the arrow and two below. I focused on a spot, drew, anchored for an instant at the corner of my mouth, and released without ever looking at my arrow. During the entire sequence, my focus was on the spot I wanted the arrow to hit. Some tradi-



Rock Bottom

By Kirby Kohler

tional bowhunters may call this technique instinctive shooting. Based on my knowledge, I used the basic technique Fred Asbell has taught and did so before I knew of Fred. This technique felt natural and it worked for me by helping me fill dozens of tags, but the last few years had been marred by too many misses. After researching various barebow shooting techniques, I decided I needed to become a gap shooter.

Initially, this change felt awkward. With three fingers under the arrow, my fingers felt out of balance on the string, the arrow seemed to "jump" off the shelf when I drew, and my nose seemed as big as Pinocchio's after numerous fibs. Despite the awkwardness, the ability to use the arrow as an aiming device brought a sense of calm to the shot process. After a couple of hundred shots,

the sequence began to come together and feel more comfortable. After several thousand, my accuracy and consistency far surpassed my ability with my previous instinctive shooting technique. After a year of shooting I hardly saw the arrow, and typically anchored while focusing on my spot for several seconds. With my confidence soaring after filling several doe tags in the early season, I headed to the woods to test my shot sequence on a rut-crazed November whitetail.

It was early afternoon when I arrived in eastern Kansas for a four-day hunt on public land that I had hunted four years prior. This particular creek

After several years of dealing with his shooting—and missing—the author taught himself a new way to shoot and took this dandy Kansas buck with new confidence.

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bottom holds a special place in my heart. There is one particular Osage orange tree in this creek bottom that is magical. I literally can't hunt there in the morning without seeing at least five bucks!

After setting up camp, I cleaned myself and headed out to scout the creek bottom for the morning hunt. When I got there, I found cattle grazing in the prairie surrounding the creek. The last time I hunted there, stands of big bluestem and Indian grass created a five-foot high wall of cover around the bottom. But now, the prairie grasses had been trampled down to the ground and the bottom smelled like a barnyard. Eventually I made it to the magical Osage funnel and reconnected with old landmarks to help me navigate in the dark.

The next morning, with help from what seemed to be a billion stars in the sky, I made it to my stand silently and without error. Eerie shadows created by the gnarly Osage branches blanketed the forest floor as I peered downward from my tree stand. Looking up, the stars and moon backlit the scene in a way an artist could only dream. The woods were scary quiet except for an

occasional “Thud!” from a hedge apple as it smacked the ground. Occasionally I'd glance up at my tree and hope one of those yellowish bombs wouldn't smack me in the head.

Not long after settling into the stand, the unmistakable sound of crunching leaves approached the base of my tree. The buck's shadow drifted past me within five yards and then he proceeded to thrash the earth at my mock scrape. After urinating on the exposed soil, he shredded a nearby sapling. His bone-white rack glowed in the morning darkness, and then he was gone.

When dawn broke, I finished my first rattling sequence and spotted a doe emerging from the thicket at the head of the funnel near the cornfield. I prepped for a shot in case a buck was trailing. Moments later, from a different direction in the creek bottom, the click of a hoof on a rock caught my attention. I panned over to my left, and in an instant the buck was out of the dry creek and in range, broadside, but with brush obscuring his vitals. He licked his nose in an attempt to identify the bucks he was sure were here moments ago. When he detected the scent of the tarsal



The view from the ground below the magical stand in the gnarly old Osage tree in Kansas.

gland that hung above my mock scrape, he moved in to get a better whiff.

As he quartered away in a small thicket next to a copse of cedars, I tried desperately to find a hole in the brush to fit an arrow through. He would move a few inches, and I would do the same. Finally I found the angle I needed to fit my arrow through a gap the size of an Osage fruit. As if I had been shooting my new shot sequence all my life, I anchored my index finger tight under my nostril, glanced at my reference point with my peripheral vision, and aimed by burning a hole with my eyes midway up his tenth rib. The arrow slammed into his chest, burying forward and low on the opposite shoulder. The buck bolted thirty yards and crashed within feet of where my buck died four years earlier. The morning sun edging over the horizon cast a fiery, orange hue across the Kansas foliage. I thought to myself, "This is a magical place."

After a thank you to the deer, the land, and God, I quartered the buck, and packed him out western style. By noon, I had pulled up camp and headed back to Wisconsin to be in a tree the

next morning. After a quick check of the forecast during the nine-hour drive home, I had a plan for the morning hunt. I was going to hunt from a tree that my son Landon and I found during a winter hike in the valley we call home. After naming the tree "Landon's Stand," I remember telling him that someone this fall would kill a buck from it during the rut on a morning hunt.

To get to Landon's Stand I hiked to the bottom of the valley, which is a 300-foot drop in elevation, then walked a half-mile through the bottom, and then climbed back up to the top of the bluff. The funnel is created by the edge of a cornfield and two rock outcrops near the top of the bluff. The deer funnel through the rock outcrops while traveling up and down the bluff, as well as between the rock outcrops and field while traversing the ridge. Scrapes and rubs of various sizes scattered through the funnel indicated that several bucks were using this travel corridor.

Unlike the previous morning in Kansas, the weather was anything but beautiful. A bone-chilling northwester blew in overnight and pounded me in the face as the morning aged. Even the sight of a yearling buck with nose to the ground scent checking the field edge for does couldn't shake the chill from my bones. Not long after he vanished, a doe appeared from the same edge, fed for a few minutes, and then drifted out of sight. Hot on her back trail was a different yearling buck sporting a cute little six-point rack. I remember warming

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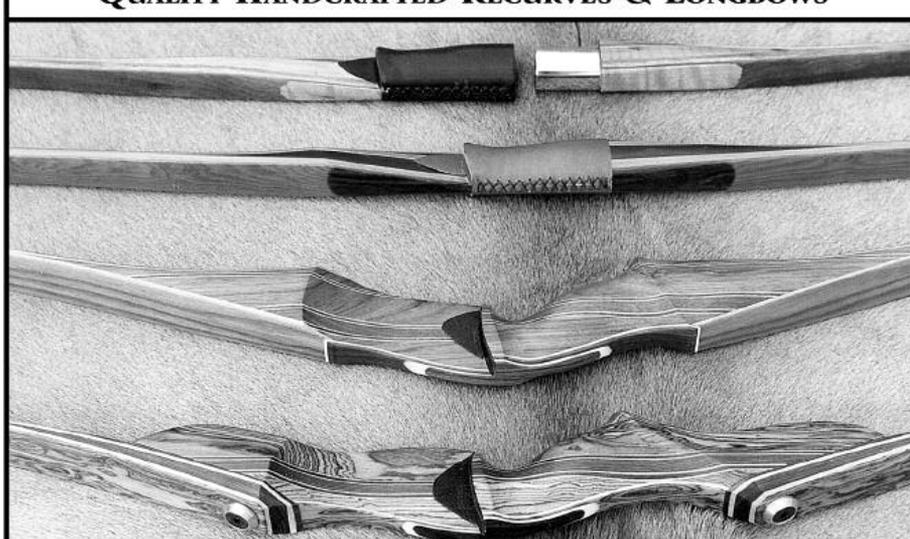
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The author with his Wisconsin buck taken from Landon's Stand.

briefly as I giggled at his frustration in trying to follow her scent trail, which was marred by the wind and a flock of turkeys that just passed by.

As the young buck drifted off in the wrong direction from the doe, I fought off the shivers by contracting my arm and thigh muscles. The first cold weather of the season always sneaks up on me, making for a miserable hunt. But the critters were moving, and it seemed as if it would only be a matter of time before a mature buck appeared. Not knowing when that time would be, I jolted from my seat when I caught movement near the field edge. A good buck appeared, with nose to the ground and not wasting any time as he approached my stand. Only a few seconds elapsed before he was within twenty yards, quartering away while walking briskly. I drew, anchored, and grunted at him with my voice to get him to stop. After the fourth grunt he finally stopped, and I focused on my spot near the back of his rib cage. The arrow struck perfectly, angling forward and through his lungs. I soon sat beside the beautiful bluff country buck and realized that the rock bottom chapter of my bowhunting career was now gone.

Albert Einstein once said, "In the middle of difficulty lies opportunity." When I hit rock bottom in my life as a bowhunter, I seized the opportunity to change. And now...I'm back.

When not teaching, coaching little league baseball, driving kids to soccer fields, and working on his hobby farm, Kirby spends his free time in bluff country learning about the flora and fauna of southwestern Wisconsin.



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Equipment Notes

In Kansas and Wisconsin, Kirby used a 49# RER Arroyo, cedar shafts, and 125-grain Snuffer broadheads.



A Tale of Two Seasons

By Sam Beuschel

I was unable to tell whether the deer was a buck even though it was standing just five yards away. In the early morning gloom, the shadowy form silently slipped away as three more emerged from the dark stand of brush to my left. I willed them to stay until the first shred of legal shooting light, but it was not to be. Four deer, at five yards, on opening day; it was exciting even without any shooting opportunities. When I rejoined my daughter Emily later and heard that she had seen three deer at about the same time—two bucks and a doe—my excitement increased. “This is going to be a good season,” I said.

The good season I anticipated would stand in stark contrast to the one that had preceded it. Not that I hadn’t had opportunities to take deer—there had been several—but those moments were uncomfortable to remember, gnawing painfully at me whenever they came to mind. The first of those opportunities came at a large doe, relaxed and looking away when I shot her, resulting, sadly, in a shoulder blade hit. An afternoon of searching produced only an evening as deer-less as that afternoon. I was frustrated and unable to answer the simple question, “What did I do wrong?”

The second moment of opportunity, arrived in the form of a small doe, three

short yards from the base of my tree. I patiently waited for the best shot angle, but the result was nothing more serious than a leg wound (and a deer that survived and was sighted a month later). “How could I have missed *that* shot?” I chided myself. Was it the steep downward angle from the high stand? Or was it possible I just couldn’t shoot?

My confidence was dwindling. Some kind of self-punishment seemed appropriate—hanging my bow up for the remainder of the season, perhaps. After all, hunting meant I had accepted the responsibility to do so ethically, and to kill humanely. And if I couldn’t accomplish the latter? A mental wrestling

match began, and when it was over a winning decision emerged: "Get back out there and hunt." The only way to beat the negative thoughts was to continue hunting, and make that perfect shot happen.

Which brought me to the third and final opportunity, this time at a young buck. I picked my spot, released, and heard the "pop" of a good hit. Then I saw half the arrow protruding from the buck's chest as he departed uphill, across a field, and into the tangled orchard, which quickly swallowed him from sight—forever. Even after the second day of searching with help from my wife, I was once again empty handed, and that was how the season ended. Sadly, I had lost deer, always a fearful possibility. But this season I had lost something more: my confidence.

During the off-season, I worked hard to restore that confidence before returning to the field. I shot as much as possi-

ble, varied shot angles, distances, and positions, and attended many 3-D shoots. Although this helped me regain confidence in my shooting ability, I knew the real test would come in the woods later in the year. Additionally, I decided to change to three-blade broadheads from my usual two-blades, reasoning that this would yield better blood trails. Despite knowing there was nothing wrong with my two-blade heads, a simple change was something I had control over and it helped me regain more of that lost confidence. I hung my stands in August—this time lower than before—and even constructed a natural ground blind with the help of my son, Nate. I was ready, and I was confident again—cautiously.

One of the deer that Emily had seen on opening morning was a buck, which she had described as big bodied, with antlers that "went high but not wide." Sadly, due to various commitments, my



The author's daughter, Emily, sitting in her ground blind where she spotted the buck.

daughter had very limited time to hunt. That was frustrating and meant I would hunt mostly alone. On a beautiful late September evening, I raced



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from work to the river bottom woods we hunted and soon settled into the tree stand a short distance behind our “honey-hole” spot—the ground blind. It was an uncomfortable stand that caused me to fidget frequently, so I was both excited and amazed when, shortly before dark, two deer appeared. The bigger of the two was a buck with a big body and a high-and-tight appearance to his antlers, clearly fitting the description of the deer Emily had seen. Unfortunately, he never ventured close enough for me to see him very well, but I felt blessed by the experience and a tranquil evening in the woods.

The following week I chose to hunt from the ground blind. Thirty minutes before last light, as I sat silently looking uphill toward the orchard, I detected movement to my left. Turning slowly, I saw the white flash of antler tips and, as I followed their travel, so too did the buck that was wearing them. This was the same deer, but as quickly as he had appeared he disappeared and I was again deprived of a clear view. Waiting patiently and hoping he would re-emerge from behind the cluster of scrubby trees that bore his licking branches, I simply ran out of daylight. As I stood before leaving I peered once more to my left. There stood the buck, facing me.

I felt sure he would rapidly depart, but to my surprise he started slowly walking toward me. At about five yards he turned, and I watched thrilled and amazed as his dark silhouette slid past me three yards away. This was the second time I had seen him, but I still had not been able to view his antlers clearly enough to count points. Regardless I dubbed him “the eight-point.”

To avoid over hunting the river bottom, I elected to stay away for a while and spend time in the “big woods”—a laughable, term as it comprises only



The tranquil fall woods are the perfect backdrop to a perfect day for finding the button buck and renewing confidence.

about five acres but is bigger than the river bottom piece. I hung a stand and then returned the next afternoon. It was the kind of day that brings peace to the heart and relaxation to body and mind. Lulled by the warm sunshine and the sounds of nature, I was quick to dismiss the rustling of leaves as “just another squirrel,” but then decided to

lean around the large maple tree to my right to check.

Four deer came into view headed toward me, and I instantly decided to take the first as it presented a perfect shot opportunity. I did not see the flight of the arrow as it covered the short distance to its destination, but I heard the impact and watched as the deer

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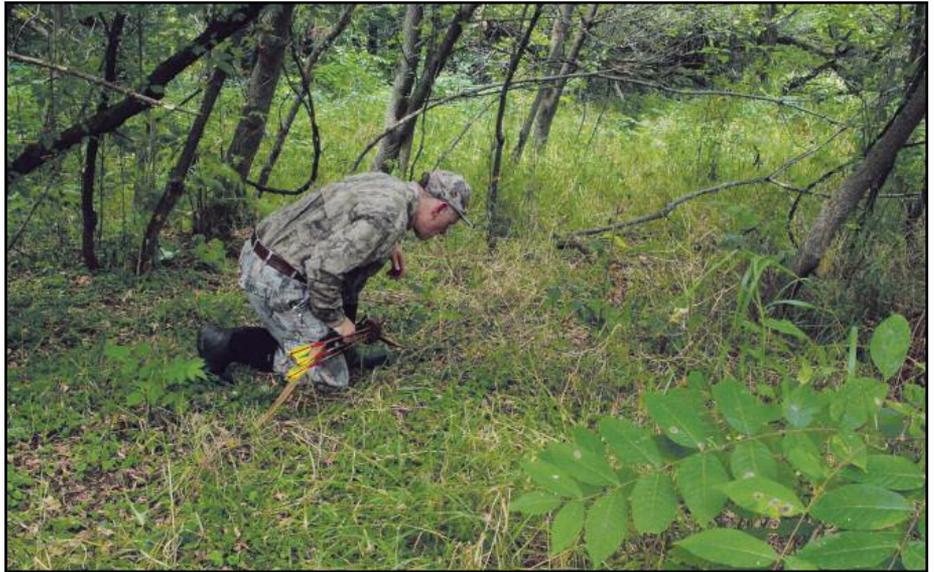
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jumped, ran off a short distance, then stopped and unexpectedly walked back to rejoin the others. I nocked another arrow anticipating a second shot, but the opportunity never arose, as the deer bedded down. I watched patiently, expecting to claim my kill, but the deer's head was still up when the sun went down.

I tried to leave quietly in the darkness without jumping the deer, but when I returned the next morning the deer was gone and there was no blood. My heart sank as memories of the previous year sprang to consciousness. Searching for clues, I found a small drop of blood that gave me some hope.



Looking for first blood; this was where the buck was standing when hit.

Guessing the direction, I followed a well-used trail and found a second drop fifty yards from the first next to an area of old blowdowns, which seemed a likely spot for a wounded deer to bed.

As I investigated, my eye caught the white of belly hair. There lay the deer, a button buck. Excitement, relief, and thanksgiving filled me as I knelt and ran my fingers from head to back to flank. "I can shoot," I told myself. Although it had been a liver shot, it appeared the deer had died early in the night. Later I butchered the deer with meticulous care, relishing the day, the sense of accomplishment it brought, and the very healthy dose of added confidence! Then I re-fletched my arrows with brighter feathers, and switched back to two-blade broadheads.

Basking in the glow of success, my thoughts returned to the excitement and sheer joy of being in the fall woods. I was anxious to get back to the river bottom and try my luck at seeing and perhaps arrowing the "eight-point." I decided to hang a stand in an alder that was close to the licking branch tree where I had seen the buck last. Ironically, I had taken a stand down from that very tree at the beginning of the season. Ten days later, I made my

way to the alder as quietly as I could and screwed in the tree steps but, despite my best efforts, I hung the stand with more noise than I care to admit.

The stand placement was poor, as it put my back at a very uncomfortable bend in the tree, but with an hour of light remaining I decided to make do. Looking out toward the tangled river bottom, a flash of movement caught my eye. Not twenty yards from me stood the "eight-point." Amazingly, I had entered the area, hung my stand, and got into position without detection. Even more amazing was that the buck began to walk toward me, and I twisted into shooting position anticipating an easy shot.

At ten yards, everything changed. The deer's relaxed, sauntering gait became tense, then rigid, and then motionless. He had not smelled me, or I am sure he would have left. I willed him to move, but he remained statue-like except for his raised nose with nostrils flared, licked by his grey-pink tongue. His antlers were *still* obscured from my view. Hip pain from my contorted position was making it increasingly difficult to hold still, and I wondered if I could outlast the buck. After an eternity of perhaps five min-

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utes, he cautiously moved to my right and into full view—*finally!* I counted, and the “eight-point” became a “ten-point.” I decided to take him.

But then he moved, stiff legged, nervous, and away from me, slowly slipping back toward the river bottom, walking in and out of shot windows. When he stopped I summed up the size of the shooting lane, the quartering away angle, the distance across a small grassy opening, and the gap between the tall milkweed stems. Then I watched bright green feathers arc up, drop rapidly behind the milkweed, and disappear.

My arrow had been released, and as the buck exploded into motion and turned, I saw for a second where it had struck—protruding from just behind his front leg. I listened as he crashed through vegetation, heard him stop, snort, then splash into the river and across to the other side, where more snorting gave way to silence. Shaking and rubbing my hip, I sat wondering if the silence meant a dead deer, or that he had made it out of the woods and into the open field and who knew where.

It was dark when I returned with my wife Brenda to take up the blood-trail, which thankfully came easily. Soon I was wading knee deep through cold, black river water before taking up the trail on the other side. In the dark we seemed to snake back and forth forever, but we had progressed less than fifty yards. I was now close to the edge of the cornfield, and my heart was sinking despite an excellent blood trail. I knew that if he had the strength to make it to the field, he probably would also have the strength to make it across, and that would complicate the search.

When I rounded a twisted tree trunk three yards from the field edge, the beam of my flashlight exposed a flat



The author's biggest deer to date, taken with a longbow.

grassy area that was covered with blood. Lying in the middle was the buck—“my” buck! It seemed too good to be true. I shouted joyfully across the darkness to my wife and then lifted the buck’s head to examine him, running my fingers over cold, smooth antlers and warm, smooth hair. Wet from the river crossing but warm with excitement, I leaned against his large body and thanked God for all that I had just experienced.

This was the largest deer I had ever taken with a longbow. I had been able to glimpse into his river bottom life three times before taking him, and when I did it was with as perfect a shot as one can make. Although jubilant with the taking of this fine animal, I also felt sad. I would no longer be able to see him in the woods and watch him lick branches or rub his antlers against bark, and I had deprived myself of the enjoyment that would have accompanied those moments. Nor would I be able to “duel” with him again, planning a new ambush in an attempt to outwit his keen senses. Later, it would occur to me what that moment of ambivalent feelings indicated: I had truly hunted. And

it had truly been a good season.

Sam is a registered nurse from Wisconsin. He is thankful for his wonderful wife Brenda, who has helped track several deer. His daughter Emily hunts with a longbow, but has yet to take her first deer with it. Sam eagerly awaits being able to tell that story when it happens!



Equipment Notes

During the hunts described the author was using a 52# Cari-Bow Wolverine bow, 3-blade Woodsmen and 2-blade Grizzly heads, and Carbon Express arrows.



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November Encounter

By E. Donnell Thomas Jr.

The annual whitetail rut may be the most widely studied and over-analyzed event in the outdoors, so much so that I rarely pay any attention to anything I read about it or hear from others. While I certainly share the excitement so many of us feel when the woods come alive with deer activity in November, I've learned what I know about hunting the rut by way of personal observation rather than through articles, seminars, and videos. (And yes, this admission gives readers a hall pass to turn the page in case they don't want to read anymore about the whitetail rut themselves.) Don't worry, though. What follows is going to be a

straightforward personal hunting story, not another attempt to describe the mindset of a horny deer.

One thing I've learned is that the whitetail rut always varies from year to year, in ways sometimes small and at other times large. My rule of thumb has always been that the central Montana whitetail rut will begin on November 14 plus or minus two days, and that estimate has proven remarkably accurate over the course of many seasons. When Lori and I headed to family property in Washington State in late October for a week of duck hunting, I felt confident

that we'd be back in plenty of time to prepare for some serious deer hunting. Hence my surprise when we drove up our road on the way home and saw bucks chasing does across our alfalfa fields on the first weekend in November.

This season, I had a new bow—the deadly little Robertson recurve described in an earlier issue—and a new tactic. Two years prior, I'd listened carefully as veteran South Dakota bowhunter Stan Rauch described his experiences with whitetail decoys at a Traditional Bowhunters of Montana

One nice thing about living where you hunt is the opportunity to watch local bucks grow over the summer.



Assembling the decoy. A decoy should be light and easy to set up quickly, even if it doesn't look much like a deer.

annual banquet. Although shoulder surgery kept me from acting upon what I'd learned, experimenting with a decoy had been on my mind ever since. With the rut in progress early this seemed like an ideal time to explore the possibilities, especially since I'd decided that a light new bow and a persistent catch in my drawing arm should limit me to even shorter ranges than usual.

The morning after our return, I rose early, packed my 3-D decoy down into our east coulee, and set it up below a stand that has been producing deer for family and friends for thirty years. As soon as I climbed—more gingerly than usual, out of respect for a right arm that still didn't work quite right—into the pine and studied the terrain below me, I decided I hadn't placed the decoy properly. Stan had emphasized that a buck will usually approach a decoy head-on, but I had placed mine uphill facing away from the direction from which deer would most likely approach. However, this was the first time I'd been in a tree stand in over a year, and I felt so relaxed and tranquil that I decided to sit still, enjoy my surroundings, and

await developments however they might unfold.

An hour later, a nice 4x4 came cruising down the lip of the little rim below me, obviously interested in looking for does. I rarely even think about shooting the first buck I see each season, but after my long absence from the woods I'd already decided to take the first deer that presented an opportunity. Besides, this really was a nice buck.

When I realized that the deer wasn't going to pass within range, I offered a soft grunt from my call. When his head shot up, his eyes locked on the decoy and the show began. Stan had emphasized that bucks usually approach a decoy in one of two ways: cautiously and curiously, or aggressively. Interestingly, that analysis precisely mirrors my experiences with rattling, of which I do a lot. This buck's attitude definitely fell into the cautious and curious category, but that didn't mean I wasn't in for a fascinating encounter.

The buck seemed incapable of keeping his eyes off the decoy as he minced uphill in my direction. He soon entered bow range, but the branches of another pine shielded his body, the totally preventable result of my failure to put adequate thought into my setup. It's hard to convey the attitude he expressed, which certainly did not include hostility. Appearing mesmerized, he paced back and forth ten yards from the decoy for several minutes without offering a shot.

He finally started to wander away, but he appeared unable to leave without one last look at the mysterious

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intruder. When he came in behind me I faced fewer obstructions, but the shot angle was unacceptable. After one of those thirty-second eternities that bowhunters know so well the buck began to turn, and I began to draw. Suddenly he flinched and bounced ten yards downhill. I had the wind and he never looked up. The air was deathly still that morning and I reasoned that the deer must have heard something as I drew. The encounter may not have

produced a shot, but there was no shortage of drama.

The following morning proved even weirder. I returned to the same stand after giving the previous day's events a lot of thought, and felt happy with the decoy's position when I surveyed the scene from aloft. An hour later, a doe appeared along the same travel route the buck had used the day before. I had abandoned an earlier attempt to use whitetail decoys several years before

when it became clear that a lot of does couldn't stand the decoy. This time though, the doe came marching in with even more determination than the buck had shown previously. She probably remained within bow range for ten minutes, and at one point had her nose little more than a yard from the decoy's muzzle. Again, it was hard for me to interpret what was going on in her brain. Asked to pick one word, I would say that she appeared entranced.

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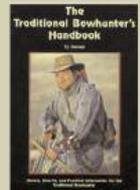
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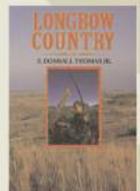
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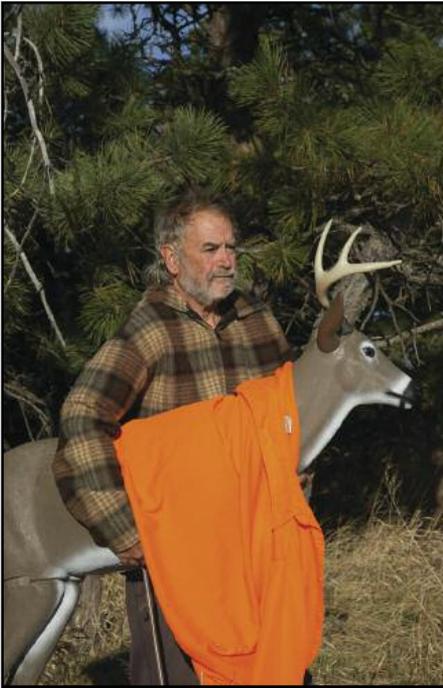


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When hunting with a decoy, be sure to cover it in hunter orange whenever you are carrying it about. Models that disassemble for easy storage in a bag are safest.

Business matters kept me occupied for the next two days. They were nasty business matters at that, and when I finally put on my hunting clothes and stepped out the door again, I needed a quiet morning in the woods more than I needed a dead deer. I didn't even bother to leave early, and warm shooting light had flooded the terrain for over an hour by the time I left the house on foot.

This time I headed downhill to the west, toward the appropriately named Don's Stand. Uncertain of my ability to climb a tree because of my bad shoulder, I'd placed a pop-up blind there a month before and hadn't been back since. The first thing I noticed was that the blind looked as obvious as a neon sign even though I'd tucked it back in a hawthorn tangle. The second thing that caught my eye was the total absence of scrapes in places rutting bucks had been tearing up for thirty years. I took the blind down, packed it partway up the hill and stashed it beside a stump.

This kind of disturbance hardly defines a textbook beginning for a whitetail hunt.

After placing the decoy and sitting quietly for thirty minutes, I rattled. Ten minutes later, a mature buck suddenly appeared fifty yards away. Usually, I can tell when a buck has come in to the sound of my rattling antlers, but in this case I honestly couldn't be sure. But then the buck spotted the decoy, and it didn't matter.

Although the buck was a solid 4x4, under ordinary circumstances I might have passed him up given that nearly two full weeks remained in the season. But given how recently I'd been uncertain of my ability to bowhunt again following shoulder surgery, a few inches of antler hardly mattered. Needing to prove a point is generally a bad reason to kill an animal, but I gave myself an exemption and went into predator mode.

While clearly aware of the decoy, this

buck didn't seem certain what he wanted to do about it. Hackles erect and puffed up like a frightened porcupine, he wandered around the clearing in front of me for several minutes, just out of bow range. Then he stomped in and made a scrape right under my tree. Plenty close enough by then, he was still at a frontal angle. Besides, I'd deliberately left several large branches on the ponderosa where Don's Stand lives—an important reason why so few deer have ever spotted me there.

The wait proved long and tense. During practice, shooting at a steep downward angle had been hard on my shoulder, so I was being especially conservative. Finally I had a clear glimpse of the deer's body slightly quartering away. The shot just happened—like melting snow falling from a leafy branch.

I sure didn't like what I saw when my mental camera's shutter clicked, however. My impression was that the

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Don with the buck that was determined to bluff Romeo out of his territory.

arrow struck back but nearly broadside, midway up the deer's paunch—in short, as close to certain disaster as possible. I saw my arrow dangling loosely from the far side of the deer as it tore off down the hill—at least the penetration had been adequate. I made a mental note of the last spot I'd seen the buck, sat quietly for fifteen minutes, and then descended to begin the climb uphill to the house.

There, I made a fresh pot of coffee and did some deep thinking. I had shot the deer at nine o'clock in the morning. The weather was unseasonably pleasant, but not warm enough to make meat care an immediate concern. There was no precipitation in the forecast. Like countless other stricken deer over the years, the buck had headed for the bottom of the coulee, beneath the bench that forms a natural travel route and

makes the stand so effective in the first place. Lori had gone to Bozeman for the day, so I was on my own. I anticipated a difficult trail across pine needle duff many deer had crossed, with little if any blood. I decided to wait six hours, return to the site of the shot, and see if I could work out the beginning of the trail without disturbing the deer if he were bedded in the bottom. Then, I would creep along the edge of the bench and glass. If I came up empty, I would return the following morning with a friend.

After a miserable wait, I initiated Phase A at three o'clock that afternoon. The first part went as expected, except that I couldn't find my arrow. I could pick out a running deer track in the pine needles and grass, but I did not follow it over the edge of the bench. There was no blood. Time for Phase B.

Since the last thing I wanted to do was to spook a dying deer from its bed, I inched along the edge of the bench as if I were stalking sheep. I'd painstakingly covered two hundred yards when I heard a magpie call below me. We have a lot of magpies in our area, but the clue was still too important to ignore. I quickly located the bird through my glasses. Then I felt a jolt of excitement when I spotted a raven perched low in a nearby pine. The West's three great avian scavengers are the magpie, the raven, and the bald eagle. Whenever you spot any two of the three together near the ground, there's a reason. A slow descent to a better glassing position soon confirmed this one: my deer, dead, lying peacefully on the grass beneath a cottonwood.

The deer wasn't stiff yet, confirming the wisdom of the delayed recovery effort. The birds that had alerted me to its presence hadn't touched the carcass. The autopsy showed that I'd shot better than I'd thought. The entrance wound



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Lori's buck, which also came in to Romeo, had plenty of character in its antlers. When daughter Nicole saw this picture, she said, "Mom, you shot a special needs buck!"

was indeed back, but it was high and the shaft had angled sharply down and forward, exiting low in front of the last three ribs on the opposite side.

The best way to learn from your bowhunting experiences is to analyze them carefully after every encounter. In addition to some basics—sharp broadhead, picking a spot—I'd done two

things right when I killed this deer. Given the amount of time the buck spent in bow range before offering an ideal shot, I'll take credit for patience. I also think my decision-making during the recovery illustrates some important points that I've learned the hard way. While I'll never know exactly how long the deer took to die, I certainly could have blown him out of his final bed and lost him by heading to the bottom of the coulee too soon.

In the same spirit, I'll give myself two demerits. I picked a spot, but I didn't quite hit it. I also failed to make an accurate assessment of precisely what my arrow had done. I blame residual awkwardness with my bad shoulder for the first mistake but have no excuse for the second. It's unusual for me to make an inaccurate evaluation of a shot, and I have no idea why I did this time.

While I certainly could have butchered the deer where it lay and packed it out myself, two enthusiastic young bowhunting friends helped me drag it up intact from the coulee bottom. That hill seems to grow steeper with every passing season now, and I certainly appreciated their help. As I eagerly awaited Lori's return, I thought

long and hard about the day's events. I'd certainly killed bigger bucks. But after the long, enforced layoff—during which I'd seriously had to confront the possibility that I would never bowhunt again—I couldn't remember one that meant more.

Being tagged out with ten hunting days left in the season did feel strange. Lori still had a tag though, and I planned to live out the rest of the rut vicariously through her. In the event, she didn't have her tag for long, but that's another story for another campfire.

Co-editor Don Thomas and his wife Lori now divide their time between homes in central Montana and southern Arizona. With kids grown and gone, their nuclear family now includes two Labrador retrievers, two German wire-hair pointers, and one Jack Russell terrier.



Equipment Notes

On this hunt, Don carried a 47# Wolfer recurve from Dick Robertson, cedar shafts from Kustom King, and Eclipse broadheads.

Romeo

After the well-known fiasco involving Cecil the Lion, T.J. Conrads and I decided we would usually edit out any names hunters might give to a wild game animal in future issues of the magazine. Sure, hunting for "Old Mossyhorns" can make a good story, but that's for hunting camp, not the general public. Wild animals don't give each other names, and we decided that in most cases we shouldn't either.

But of course we give our dogs names. And what about an inanimate object? Lori and I soon grew tired of talking about "the decoy," so we named it (him?) Romeo.

Curious about the success we enjoyed that season (the buck Lori killed later responded to him too), a number of hunters have asked what kind of decoy we used. I would love to report that we laboriously handcrafted him ourselves, as we've done for decoys meant to attract a variety of species. Truth is, he came in a box, purchased at a retail outlet while we were on our way back from a duck hunt. He doesn't even look all that much like a real deer.

I don't think it matters, for the same reason I don't think it matters whether your bugle really sounds like an elk or your yelp really sounds like a hen turkey. The key points are the details of the setup and the mood of the animal. Sorry, Romeo—it's not your animal magnetism.

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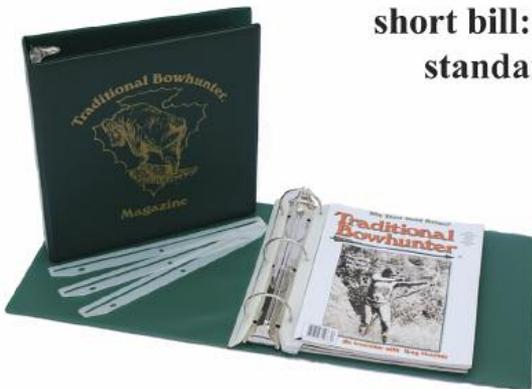


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I could hear every step as the gobbler strutted along the old logging road, supremely aware that he was a magnificent specimen of the eastern wild turkey. As my heartbeat began to accelerate, the Gobbler Guillotine at the end of my arrow shaft began to boogie to the thudding rhythm of my pulse. Perched seductively in the clover field only twelve short steps from my blind, were a couple of hen decoys. It appeared inevitable that I would soon get an easy shot, except that there is no such thing as an easy shot at a wild turkey, particularly when one's heartbeat is racing in overdrive and adrenaline is pumping into the bloodstream with every throb of heart muscle.

As the gobbler entered my shooting window I was breathing fast, and my arms suddenly felt weak. I have little experience shooting from blinds and was unsure how much movement my quarry would tolerate, so I drew slowly, picked a spot in the middle of his glowing blue neck, and watched in dismay as the huge whirling gizmo on the tip of my arrow slashed right under my target, leaving the bird unscathed. The tom jumped as though charged with a bolt of electricity, and as he half-ran, half-flew back down the old roadbed, I felt physically ill. Why hadn't I waited till the bird was at a better angle and I had a long, straight neck at which to shoot? With one terrible decision, I screwed up the easiest shot that I have ever had in ten years of turkey hunting with a bow.

I freely admit that I am a casual turkey hunter who often finds chasing gobblers with a traditional bow frustrating, while gun hunting them seems way too easy. My good friend Wayne "Biggie" Hoffman, who gave up bowhunting turkeys a few years back, says that God made turkeys to be shot in the head with a large, powerful shotgun and then cut into strips, fried, and served with gravy. Not quite as good as country fried steak, he says, but it will do in a pinch. I suspect he just got hungry waiting to kill an eastern bird with his bow. After all, we don't call him Biggie for nothing.

The birds in my home state of Georgia particularly confound me, because during our deer season one frequently has to kick them out of the way to get to a deer stand while they stand around purring and staring at you. Scare them out of a food plot and they will be right back in a few minutes, feeding unconcerned. But come spring, this critter with a tiny brain and smaller vitals seems almost impossible to kill, for me anyway. When I can stand to watch outdoor TV, which is not often, I see huge gobblers strut right up to plastic hens and try repeatedly to mate with them while six guys in a blind take pictures of guys shooting arrows through them at different angles. Where do these birds live? They



Two-Shot Turkey

By Matt Schuster

don't live on my land in Warren County, Georgia!

My birds circle the decoys thirty yards out, strut only behind big trees or, worse yet, they wait till the late morning when I tend to be bored and asleep before they sneak in to check out my shapely foam models. Not only do they wake me up, I rarely get a shot once I remember where I am and what I am supposed to be doing. In ten years of bowhunting turkeys, I never had one mature gobbler come all the way in

After blowing his first shot, Matt took this Eastern turkey after the bird gave him a second chance.

to my decoys in Georgia until the missed shot described earlier. This may speak more to my turkey hunting prowess than to the sex drive of our native turkey population. After all, they do seem to reproduce as we reportedly have plenty of turkeys.

I am not a totally inept and unsuccessful turkey hunter. A couple of years ago one of those foolish Texas-brand gobblers strutted in to me while I was clad in a ghillie suit and leaning against a huge live oak tree. I shot him through the vitals with a Snuffer. He managed to fly off with my arrow in him and had just achieved treetop level when he fell dead. That was pretty cool, but probably just proves that Rios aren't all that smart, since I managed to kill one.

Back home, every spring I commit myself saying this will be the year I get dedicated and put in the time to bag an eastern bird. But after a couple of frustrating weeks, I usually switch over to chasing hogs, which are numerous and unwary enough to fit my profile of a perfect quarry. I decided 2008 would really be the year I was going to get after them, so I got a fancy blind, a couple of new calls, a Gobbler Guillotine, some bug spray, and a positive attitude. Due to a business meeting I missed opening weekend, but planned to head down to my farm on Sunday where I was building a

cabin. I planned to work a little on Sunday so I could get after the gobblers on Monday morning. On the drive down, I called my longtime hunting buddy, Dudley McGarity, to see how the weekend hunt had gone. "No birds, no gobbles, didn't even hear a gunshot," he said.

That's typical for our farm in the eastern part of the state, where turkeys are numerous all winter, only to disappear across the Ogeechee River where they go bugging in the huge fields of a commercial catfish farm. "But," Dudley added, "I did find a good bird and a great place to kill one with your bow while I was out jogging this morning. I ran right up on two hens and a gobbler in the mattress food plot, and the whole place is scratched up. I set up a blind but haven't hunted it, so you need to give it a shot tomorrow if you can."

Dudley is a competent and experienced traditional bowhunter who has hunted all over the world in his job as president of BPI, the parent company of such brands as Connecticut Valley Arms and Powerbelt bullets. When he says a spot is good, it usually is. Although he is a generous hunter, I still figured he made the offer to let me hunt his blind because he thought I was no threat, and that I would just check the place out to see if it was good enough for him to hunt with his shotgun at a later date.

After spending Sunday afternoon working on my cabin and hurting my back, I spent the night tossing and turning on a tiny cot and yelling at my dog, Montana, who kept barking at the unfamiliar sounds of the new house and the local coyote population, which apparently lives under my back porch. No way was I going to get up and go sit in a mosquito-filled blind before daylight in a futile attempt to shoot the one gobbler living on a thousand acres. Sleep was what I was going to do. I felt as if I had just dozed off when Montana went nuts and I heard a truck door slam.

"Hey, Mohican, let's go kill a turkey!" It was my builder Will and his buddy Luke, who had received permission to hunt the property next door, and for some reason felt that they needed to drive up and drink coffee a full two hours

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before first light.

“What the hell are you guys doing here at five a.m.? It doesn’t get light till seven.”

Luke grinned and said, “Will likes to get an early start, and he don’t feel like he’s hunting unless he gets to walk for at least an hour in the dark, so here we are.” We drank coffee so strong you could use it to break a window and then talked turkeys for an hour before they headed out, and I did, too. Heck, I figured I could sleep in a blind as well as anywhere.

A couple of hours later I was fighting to stay awake while sitting on a half-acre clover field in Dudley’s well-concealed blind. My occasional clucks and yelps had produced exactly nothing, and I just knew that back in his office, Dudley was sending out e-mails to our buddies about how he had me sitting in a blind where there hasn’t been a turkey seen since Thanksgiving. Then I heard what might be a gobbler way down the river. It might also have been the yapping dog that I had heard earlier; I couldn’t be sure. I cupped my hand over my mouth and sent a little sexy talk toward the sound and got an immediate response. I was in business!

The next gobbler was closer, so I responded with appropriate coyness and started getting situated to shoot. The bird got more excited as he closed the distance between us and began gobbling at every call, every crow, and even sounds I couldn’t identify. Then just like that it was over, and I had missed the only easy shot I have ever been offered at a mature eastern gobbler. Then I heard him in strut again! Wow, it could still happen. Please God, give me one more chance, I remember thinking. I deserve another chance—okay, I really don’t, but please give me one anyway.

I put another arrow on the string and leaned up to peer out of the blind. The tom was puffed up, but a little farther out this time and taking tiny steps toward the field. But he

was moving my way, and if he kept coming I would get another chance. Screwing up is a great motivator, and I felt much more calm, focused, and ready this time. I was prepared to shoot when the bright, shiny head entered my window, so I stared at his vitals and shot a strong arrow right in front of his wing butt. He dropped from strut and strode quickly across the food plot. Did he stumble as he left the field? I wasn’t sure but felt great about the shot and the placement of the Wensel Woodsman. I sat back, took a deep breath, and said a little prayer of thanks. Then I heard him do the death flop just out of sight and knew he was mine.

It sure felt good to put my hands on that bird. A typical two-year-old, he had three quarter inch spurs and a nine-inch beard, which were just fine with me. A nice, mature, and suitably foolish gobbler makes a nice trophy. I thought about something I heard Monty Browning say on several occasions, “Hey, you gimme three shots at ten yards and I will kill anything on earth!” I agree, and it only took two this time, which means I just might have one more coming. Lord knows, I will probably need it.

Matt Schuster lives outside of Atlanta, Georgia, where he runs a small sales agency in the footwear business. He has been a PBS councilman and is active in his state bowhunting organization.

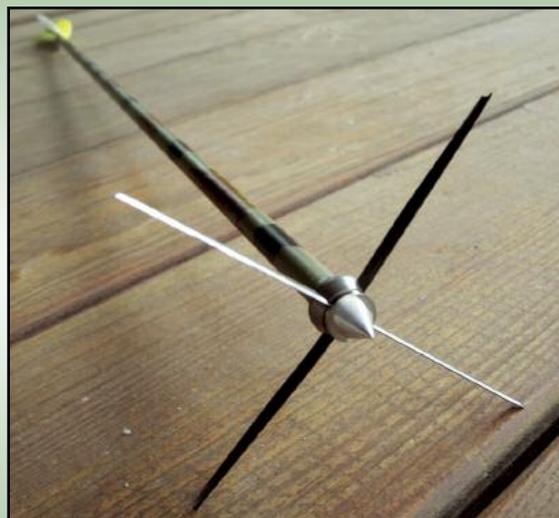


Equipment Notes

Matt took his gobbler with a 58# Archery Traditions Patriot recurve, a 2216 aluminum arrow with half of a 2016 glued up front, and a 125-gr. Wensel Woodsman head with a 100-gr. steel insert added for extra weight.

Gobbler Guillotine

This unique head, designed to put a turkey down instantly when its extended blades sever a tom’s head or neck, came to my attention on a Texas hunt with my good friend Keith Bruner of Metter, Georgia. The previous year, Keith had lost a bird that appeared to have been perfectly hit with a traditional head. Drawn to the kill-or-miss proposition offered by the Guillotine, Keith put one in his quiver and on the second day of our hunt shot a nice gobbler with his longbow. The guillotine hit the bird in the top of the head and dropped it instantly, just as advertised. Although I have yet to use the guillotine successfully, Keith has killed several more turkeys with it and has yet to lose a bird hit by one.





pile behind the greenhouse at town's edge, where chipmunks lived and where I started hunting. Next Saturday, I'd buy another arrow.

Like freshly fired paper shotshells on crisp October mornings, cedar shafts of that day imprinted on all my senses. Beneath the paint and pressed-on metal point, the new wood scent had a hint of ginger. I launched arrows into the sky just to hear their whisper as they descended. Though I've since used arrows of fiberglass, aluminum, and carbon, I still prefer wood from the coastal forests of the Pacific Northwest.

Port Orford cedar—*Chamaecyparis lawsonia*—was discovered near the still-small town of Port Orford, Oregon. Collectors working for Lawson & Son Nursery in Edinburgh, Scotland began cultivating it in 1854. It is also called Lawson cypress, false cypress, and Port Orford white cedar. Close relatives are the Alaska yellow cedar and Atlantic white cedar. All belong to the family *Cupressaceae*, which includes cypresses, cedars, and junipers. In the same taxonomic division as English yew, it is one of roughly 630 species of conifers.

Despite its limited range—a 200-mile strip stretching forty miles inland and into northern California—Port Orford cedar thrives at elevations from sea level to 5,000 feet. Mature trees can grow 200 feet tall and seven feet in diameter. Sapwood and heartwood are light to medium brown in color and can be hard to distinguish. (The new wood of all

Port Orford Cedar

Wood born to fly.

It comes from big trees, but its range is small. Arrows don't threaten it, but root infection does.

By Wayne van Zwoll

Saturday morning, I'd walk a mile to the sporting goods store. Bows and arrows were in the back, a dark place. When my eyes dilated enough to see the boxes bristling with feathered shafts, I'd lift each and squint down its length. With 144 arrows in the 25-cent box, this inspection took time. But a 12-year-old has time.

Eventually, satisfied I had the straightest of the lot, I'd take that arrow to the counter and trade the quarter in my pocket. Earned shoveling Michigan snow at 75 cents a drive, that cash was precious. More so Port Orford cedar arrows! Within a week, sadly, that shaft would shatter on the rock

young trees carries water and nutrients upward. As trees grow, the center becomes inactive heartwood, while sapwood on its periphery continues to nourish the top. "Extractives" in heartwood add hardness, decay resistance and, commonly, color. Heartwood of walnut and ebony trees is significantly darker than their sapwood.) Seed cones of Port Orford cedar are two to three times the diameter of male cones, which turn dark russet after pollen release in spring.

Fine wood bows and arrows qualify as art. A burnished shaft flies. Paint, cresting, and lacquer add cosmetic appeal.

Strong and straight-grained, wood from Port Orford cedars is lightweight, elastic, and rot and crush resistant. It is easy to machine and takes stain, paint, and lacquer well. Ideal for arrows, it's also used in boats. When in 1992 a full-scale replica of the Santa Maria was built to commemorate the 500th anniversary of the discovery of America by Christopher Columbus, builders chose Port Orford cedar for major components. The wood has also turned up in stadium seats at the Rose Bowl and in park benches at Yosemite. It enhances sound in guitars. It's a preferred wood for coffins in Japan. During WW II, its acid resistance pressed this wood into service in battery separators.

Given its many uses and small footprint on our West Coast, you'd think native Port Orford cedar costly. It is. Demand could also easily strip forests of old-growth timber. The ICUN (International Union for Conservation of Nature) placed Port Orford cedar on its "Red List" of species bearing a close watch. I looked at this roster, comprising 1597 pages on my computer screen. While some species were listed as "critically endangered," ICUN spared Port Orford cedar this alarming label. Widely cultivated, this tree is considered "stable" as to population trend in Oregon and California. Its greatest threat is not from the saw, but from a fungal root rot (*Phytophthora lateralis*).

Probably no archer is in closer touch with Port Orford cedar than Jerry Dishion, whose company, Rose City Archery, makes arrows from this wood. Millions of arrows! Just a few miles from Port Orford, this Myrtle Point manufacturing plant and retail outlet pays only "about \$75 a load" for the trucking of logs from the woods. Having driven a log truck in another life, I know how transport costs add hugely to bottom line expense. "Throughout history, myriad woods have found their way into arrow shafts," Jerry reminds me. "We've used pine in shafts for export and youth programs. But the straight-grained pine we prefer comes from Idaho.

Getting those trees here makes the arrows quite expensive." He's used fir too, but says, "It is heavy, and comes from the tree stubbornly crooked. It won't stay true after straightening."

Jerry's standards are high, of course. He runs his business in the shadow of trees that produce the best arrow wood in the world! His tenure at Rose City Archery (established in 1932) started in 1994, but he's been an archer since 1948, and connected with the industry most of his life.

"I didn't know when I started making arrows from trees just how many steps were involved. Last time I figured, we put the wood through forty-two operations to finish an arrow. No doubt some people who visit our plant have the notion that they'll make arrows too. I hide nothing from these would-be competitors. By the time they leave, they're thinking of other ways to earn a dollar."

Jerry tells me he takes only dead Port Orford cedars, down and standing. "We don't kill trees. The rot resistance of the species, with that insect-repelling ginger scent, ensures the wood will stay useful for years. Port Orford cedars stand

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Turkey farmers now raise white birds; natural barred fletch has given way to unbarred or dyed-barred.

after bugs, then birds and squirrels, have dropped pines, firs, and Douglas firs.” He says the cedars come from state, federal, and privately owned tracts, “all within fifty miles of our operation.” Wherever they’re salvaged, and whatever their condition or age, the trees must be dried from about thirty percent moisture to the final eight percent required in an arrow shaft. “Trees lying in bogs don’t hold much more water than standing timber,” Jerry points out. “Water in the fibers didn’t leak in. It’s residual water taken up to feed the foliage.”

The trees are sawn into cants, 1/2 x 3 x 32 inches. “We air-dry them in ovens I fashioned,” explains Jerry. “Kilns

would be too hot.” Drying is a matter of days—not years, as in fine walnut destined for rifle stocks. Rose City Archery makes shafts in diameters 1/4, 9/16, 11/32, and 23/64-inch. “Spine is measured between posts 26 inches apart, with a 1.94-pound weight suspended at midpoint. A computerized device records deflection. Most 9/16 shafts test 30 to 40 pounds draw weight; 11/32 and 23/64 shafts commonly test 40 to 60 pounds. There’s great demand for stiff shafts. Occasionally, to fill an order for lighter weight than tested, we turn a batch one size smaller. We figure 15 pounds draw weight per step in shaft size. But of course, spine-matched arrows must test within a 5-pound window. Weight-matched shafts are held to within 10 grains.”

Unless otherwise specified, Rose City shafts are of Premium grade for straightness. That is, the grain follows the arrow for at least twenty-one inches. Some Select grade shafts are marketed as youth or utility arrows. “We sell about 75 percent as bare shafts—to archers (on site and on-line), and to wholesale and retail shops. We offer lengths of 24, 26, 28, 30½ and 32 inches. A quarter of our production goes into finished arrows. We stain, dip and crest. For six years now, we’ve added painting to our finish options.” He tells me final burnishing on a shaft compresses the fibers and makes the arrow usable even without coats of finish. “Everyone likes pretty arrows though, and the lacquer we



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use—as many as four coats—is waterproof.” Color, crest, and fletch are customer’s choice, per special order. Predictably, many archers prefer barred feathers on cedar. These days, more than 90 percent are artificially barred because everyone is raising white turkeys. Special runs of Rose City arrows wear natural barred fletching.

Three years ago Jerry succeeded in convincing Bear Archery to let Rose City reproduce some of the early Bear arrow designs and packaging to “bring back an original look.” They’ve been a big hit with archers—not just Fred Bear fans, but also those of us who grew up in the shadow of Bear and Howard Hill and remember days when a dozen spine-matched hunting arrows cost as many dollars, and cheap missiles to shatter on rock piles could be had for a quarter.

Jerry’s son, Kaleb Sherritt, now 31, has worked fifteen years in the Rose City shop. He doesn’t recall the 1950s and ’60s. But he’s learned a lot about the Port Orford cedars that still darken the forests near the shop in southwest Oregon. Kaleb knows a lot, too, about turning wood into arrows.

“Fortunately, an arrow doesn’t require much wood,” Jerry tells me. “There won’t be a shortage of Port Orford cedar anytime soon. Land sakes, one slope in the Coast Range foothills grows enough wood to supply our shop for centuries!”

For archers many miles from the sleepy town of Port Orford, Oregon, that’s good news indeed!

Regular contributor Wayne van Zwoll has written sixteen books on big game hunting and sporting arms. He currently resides in eastern Washington State.



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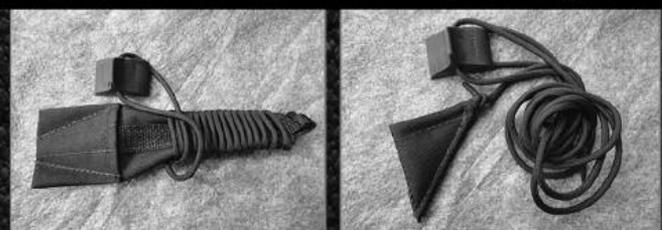
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Supernatural September

By Nate Bailey

Scholars who pour over ancient manuscripts become part of a fraternity obligated to truth that has been handed down through the ages. This fraternity may look like it's an elite group from the outside, but it's not. Rather, it's an all-encompassing lifestyle with many parts drawn together by one common denominator—the ancient art of archery. Thousands of years old, there is an endless cistern of knowledge, some of which I have studied since I was a young man.

I first picked up the stick and string as a child, a gift handed down from my grandfather. Back then, I didn't understand the spell that proper arrow flight would have over me. All I knew was

that the bow meant freedom. He knew the importance of letting boys be boys, fostering the type of freedom that was essential to feeding the masculine soul. Grandpa used the bow and arrow as a tool to foster this freedom. I'll never forget the small fiberglass and ash bow he turned me loose with and let me shoot. My brother and I would venture into the woodlot behind his house, confident that we had nothing to worry about, knowing we had the tools to take care of ourselves. Small birds and rodents became our quarry, with the blue jay being a prize above all others. But as close as our arrows came, we never hit a one. Looking back, that was a good thing, because we were expected to eat

what we killed. After all, that was a part of the responsibility the bow brought to our lives.

Little did I know the path to which all those childhood days behind the riser would lead. While other kids talked about their futures and what they were studying in order to get there, I did whatever it took to keep me in the woods with my bow. The bow and arrow led me to study—not the ruler-bearing schoolhouse master kind, but rather an apprenticeship. My scholarship felt like an obligation to the lifestyle and label of bowhunter. Archery and traditional bowhunting scholars have passed their knowledge down through the chasm of time to bet-



The author's camp deep in the Oregon wilderness.



Rubs are tell-tale sign of elk.

ter the future of those willing to put their written words to practice. People like Saxton Pope, Fred Bear, and Glenn St. Charles penned the rich history of exploration through the school of hard knocks. They were passing on lessons learned through true experiences, life lessons to apprentices that would provide the foundations from which bowhunting would grow. Every boot print we leave in the woods simply adds to this grand syllabus.

There is no better place to ponder such matters than on a cool September ridge. My time is tight during this time of year, as this is peak season in my business of guiding fly-fishermen down the Rogue River. I didn't expect to get out much for the Oregon bow elk season. To tell the truth, elk season had lost some of the spark it once carried for me. Of course I was shooting my bow every day and had my gear up to snuff, but the thought of packing into the

wilderness seemed more like work than a vacation after putting in twelve hour days on the river. It wasn't until I read one of my favorite scholar's works, "September," by T.J. Conrads, that the fire reignited. Like some of my other mentors he had never met me, but his written words and images had helped to form my traditional bowhunting passion. For years I read every article, gleaned every ounce of wisdom I could, and tried every suggestion that came

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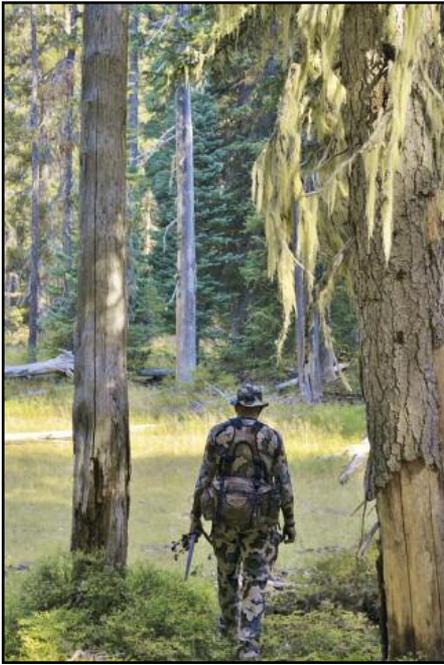
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Left, Jerry Gowins hunts down through moss-covered big timber. Above, nap time during the mid-day lull.

across from magazine pages and websites. But that article drew me beyond intellect, making it clear to me there was no way I was going to stay out of the dark timber that year.

It also reminded me of the need to share the season. Of course the usual suspects, Tucker and my son Gage, would share the elk tent, but there was something that pushed me to give back to the guys that had given me so much over the years. Jerry Gowins was one of

those guys. The sight of some of his cover images still takes me back to places and hunts that are burned into my soul. I had taken Jerry and his wife Nancy down the river in August. Through the elk hunting talk that takes place among those who have experienced it, I knew that offering to take Jerry into my hunting grounds would be the perfect pay back to one of the mentors who had shared so much with

me.

Jerry accepted the offer, but shortly after getting off the phone with him I became nervous. What was I thinking? Sure, there were a ton of elk in the area I had scouted, but would I be able to make his drive to southern Oregon worthwhile? Only time could provide an answer, but I did know that if I were to have any chance of showing Jerry some animals, I had to spend time in the elk woods.

September 6, 2014. It was hard to get out of bed but Jerry would be down the next weekend, and I thought I'd better get a bull pinned down for him. With the help of a dark Italian roast, I made it to the edge of the wilderness before sunrise. The morning was the kind elk hunters grow accustomed to in September—just cool enough to make me wear my heavy wool shirt, but bright enough that I knew it wouldn't be so for long. The earth was fresh and revealed its inhabitants well, making my expectation for the day grow. Elk tracks meandered everywhere. They spoke of an unmolested herd that was still in "elk mode." This was a welcome sight, as it's getting harder and harder

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Nate inspects one of dozens of wallows in search of fresh elk sign.

to find elk acting calmly in the Cascades. A comfortable herd is a hunt-able herd.

I made my way along the ridge, throwing out soft cow calls and hoping a bull would investigate. The magic of the elk woods wooed me into being a spectator, an action that drew me away from being an active participant with my elk call. Steam gently lifted off the fresh earth as the birds and squirrels awakened to continue their fall's work. The thumping sounds of pine cones dropping to the ground soon filled the morning woods. I was so swept away that it took me nearly a mile before I remembered why I was there. I don't know if it was just the knowledge that my favorite willow was getting close or something more supernatural, but I suddenly knew I had to give a gentle, drawn out cow mew. Before I could finish, I heard an animal making its way up the ridge to me. I jumped at first but then blew it off as a squirrel. I had started to move again when the squirrel grew hooves. The distinct sound of a galloping elk

filled my ears from a couple of hundred yards downhill, closing on me like thunder.

I quickly dropped my pack and stepped behind a large ponderosa pine. If the producer of this fine music were to pass my way, it would be uphill of me through a clearing. Seconds poured out

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The author connected on this bull during another magical September.

like cold gear oil. Each hoof beat struck my heart like a gong, making it resonate faster and faster until I thought it was going to come out of my chest. I'm not sure what I saw first, the small fir trees parting or the bull's black six-point rack. My drawing hand made its way to a solid anchor at the side of my lips. The bull caught me drawing at a mere ten paces, then whirled, made ten more steps uphill, turned broadside, and looked at me, smirking as if I were the ugliest cow he had ever seen.

"Pick a spot. Quit looking at antlers." Those thoughts ran through my mind so loudly that I thought the bull was going to hear them. Muscle memory and countless hours of practice took over. My eyes burned a hole in the tuft of hair that covered the bull's heart until my subconscious completed the necessary vectors, automatically releasing my energy into the once static arrow. Its fresh fletches tickled the edge of my beard as it gained speed. The moment of impact was lost to me. I couldn't definitely tell where the arrow hit, but the bull ran with the shaft sticking more than halfway out. Panic shot through

my mind. Did I hit too far forward? I was sure of where I was concentrating, but the arrow didn't bury deep. I thought that it must have struck heavy bone. Discouragement filled the screen of my mind, and out of desperation a simple mew left my call. The bull ran a couple of more steps, stopped, turned broadside again, and looked me straight in the eyes. I was pinned down.

The subconscious stopped the conscious from reaching for another arrow, knowing that the longer the wounded bull stood in front of me, the better. The last thing I wanted to do was to send the animal in an adrenaline-induced stampede through the Sky Lakes Wilderness. Within seconds, the bull's eyes turned from stone resolution to weary confusion. He took a few more steps uphill, then turned as his powerful legs started to buckle underneath him.

I couldn't believe what I had just witnessed. I was extremely happy and thankful, yet I felt ambivalent because I had just taken a life to sustain my own. Honesty poured over the fir scented breeze as I stood in awe, bow hang-

ing at my knees on lifeless arms overtaken by the raw emotion of the event that just unfolded before me. Control left my legs. I fell to the forest duff, and then prayed until I heard the last labored breath of a creature I so admired. There were no thoughts of "Smoked him!" as I regained my wits, just a deep respect for the animal that would feed my family for the year, and pure admiration to the One who would create and deliver such a beast to us.

I couldn't help but feeling the hands of past bowmen lifting me up and leading me to the bull. Laying my hands on the monarch left me feeling the eternal connection to others who relied on blood they spilled to sustain their own. A realization hit me. I had been called to the mountains by a power greater than the fraternity of men, yet men were the vehicle from which the calling came, steeped so deep in the supernatural it suddenly became natural.

The following weeks confirmed what I'd realized on that quiet September ridge as Jerry, Tucker, Gage, and I shared blown stalks, good food, and more laughter than anyone thought possible. The magical month of September transcended the mere physical and beckoned us to look toward the heavens, thanking those who had gone before leaving their mark for the rest of us to follow, and the Spirit which led them there.

When Nate Bailey isn't chasing steelhead or trout he can be found in the southern Oregon woods waiting out a blacktail buck or bugling challenges to a bull elk.



Equipment Note:

Nate used a 53# Checkmate Crusader longbow and a 3Rivers carbon arrow tipped with a Magnus head to kill his elk



Cliff Hanger

By Robb Sager

Some would call me driven or determined, others may call me bull-headed or stubborn. I get my mind set on something and focus on that until I accomplish what I set out to do. But this time I had to step aside, I had to accept a friend's help. It was the best thing for both of us, not to mention the dead sheep above hanging from a cliff. We were climbing the steep slope together, trying to reach the sheep and somehow release it from its perilous position.

I killed a bighorn ram in 2010 after applying for a coveted tag for more years than I can remember. I had an excellent experience and learned that I really liked sheep hunting as well as their exceptional meat. I was fortunate to hunt with my wife for a ram two years later, further whetting my newly found appetite for sheep hunting. (*TBM* Feb/Mar 2014) With a waiting period of seven years before I was eli-

gible to apply for another ram or ether sex tag, I turned my attention to a much easier tag to obtain—a bighorn ewe tag. With no waiting period and relatively decent odds of drawing, I started applying for a ewe tag in an area in Central Montana that a friend said had plenty of sheep.

The fourth year I applied for the ewe tag I was fortunate enough to draw it, leaving me scrambling to find out more about the area. I made several phone calls, and from the information I obtained there were plenty of sheep in my area. The sheep could be found on both public and private lands and most of the areas were somewhat accessible by vehicle or boat.

I planned a scouting trip during the summer to get a better feel for the area and hopefully see some sheep. As luck would have it, the day I left to scout a heavy rainstorm moved

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Practice across the yard at a sheep target could hardly prepare the author for the challenges of his sheep hunt.

into the entire state and dropped historic amounts of rain. I picked up Greg, a friend, on the way and we drove to my area. It soon became apparent we were not going to be able to travel off of the main road. When Central Montana gets just about any amount of moisture, the dirt becomes a gumbo unlike any other and off-road travel is out of the question.

We drove the main road through the area without seeing anything but rain on our windows. I was left wondering what the country would look like without mud inches deep and a torrent of rain thundering down. All told, the area received some seven inches of rain in a couple of days.

During the month or so I had to wait before my return, I often wondered just what the hunt would be like. Greg assured me he often saw sheep there and that he would try to schedule some time off his busy work schedule to help me. The time finally arrived, and I once again headed north with high hopes of finding some sheep. My dad joined me this time, and Greg would be available to help if we were not able to find sheep the first few days.

The rain had made the country look like a lavish golf course minus all the carts and people. I was impressed by the steepness of all of the canyons and ravines. The white rock with all the crags, crevices, and caverns gives the place an almost mystical feeling. There were plenty of places to hide sheep. We would have to be patient and look over as much terrain as possible.

Driving down the road, I noticed a truck parked on a hill. "The only person that would drive up on a high point such as that would have to be a hunter looking for sheep," I said to my dad. We pulled up below the truck and were greeted by another hunter. Coincidentally this fellow was also hunting for a ewe and had been in the area for a week. He said

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The steep canyons and cliffs provide plenty of places for sheep to disappear. The author and his dad on the hunt for sheep.

he had spent a week earlier in the season hunting with a bow and now had returned with a rifle to try to get the job done. I kept thinking, "What am I up against? This guy has been here for a week with a rifle and has yet to kill a sheep." In talking to the guy, it seems the sheep in the area are hunted fairly regularly due to the number of permits given for ewes. They are educated and difficult to get close to. Sounded like a challenge to me!

Throughout the next couple of days we roamed around learning the country and looking for sheep. We saw plenty of sign on the several hikes we took from the main road, but it wasn't until the second morning that we saw the first sheep high on a ridge. I was anxious to make my first stalk and set out trying to get above the small group of ewes and lambs. My initial thought was that I was going to kill a ewe on my first stalk. I began to draw back my bow as the lead ewe fed into range below me. When she exploded back across the mountain away from me after seeing just my bow tip peaking over the rock I was hiding behind, I was shaken back to reality. These sheep were going to be a challenge, especially given my choice of equipment—a sinew backed Osage bow, river cane arrows, and obsidian arrowheads. I would need to be very close for an ethical shot.

As the time slipped by with only a few more sheep sightings, Greg joined us for a day of hunting and took us to a new area. We spotted some sheep a mile or so away on the other side of what appeared to be an impassable canyon. We worked our way along the edge to the head of the canyon and decided we could circle around and work our way down the other side in order to make a stalk on the sheep.

Descending the side of the canyon, we tried to determine where the sheep would be in relation to where we had spotted them. I got the feeling we should be getting close and motioned to my dad and Greg to stop so I could creep for-



Shed antlers of elk and deer, other animals that make their homes in the steep canyons of central Montana.

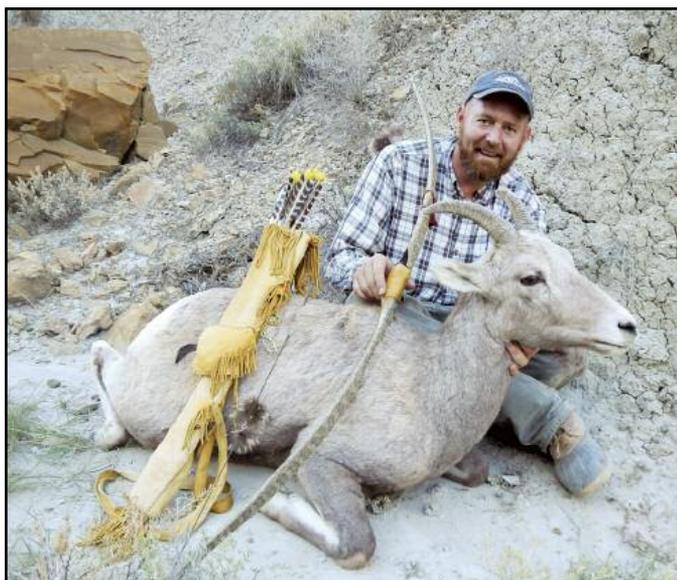
ward and look over the edge of the canyon. I crawled up to a big rock, peeked over, and saw the sheep lying on the other side of the rock not five yards away. Slipping an arrow out of my quiver I eased up over the rock. The sheep jumped to their feet. The closest adult ewe was standing looking in the other direction out over the canyon, apparently unaware of the nearby danger. I picked a spot and shot her in the pocket behind the shoulder.

Upon impact of the arrow, the sheep leaped straight over the steep canyon wall and disappeared from view, followed by the other members of the herd. I motioned to Dad and Greg to come forward and shared the news of what appeared to be a super hit. We watched for a few moments and finally saw sheep moving up the opposite side of the canyon. Counting them as they came into view, we waited for the final sheep to appear. When she didn't, we all knew she must be dead somewhere below.

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The author and his “Cliff Hanger” sheep.

Examining the canyon wall where the sheep had disappeared, we realized there was no way we would be able to get down to the bottom. It was just too steep, and the rocks were too unsteady. We turned our attention to the far side of the canyon and a slight ridge coming down from the top. This way down into the canyon looked promising, although it would require at least a three-mile walk around to find out. Not seeing any other options, we set out back around the head of the canyon.

Stopping at the truck to refill our water bottles, we worked our way down the opposite side of the canyon to the ridge we had seen from the far side. Greg found a game trail which we knew would lead us down the side, so we used it and found our way down. Once on the bottom, we moved to where we believed my sheep should have been. With no sign of her on the canyon floor, we turned our attention to the canyon wall above. About halfway up the side of the canyon, we could see the rump of a sheep, obviously dead, hanging precariously over a cliff.

Looking for a way up to the sheep, we noticed a cut in

the wall that appeared to lead just below the ewe. After praying for safety, Greg and I started climbing up the cut. About halfway to the sheep, I began to lose my nerve. I have no doubt I would have been able to recover it if I remembered all I had been through already just to get a shot at the ewe. I hunt from tree stands often and I feel I am fairly comfortable with heights, but I kept kicking rocks loose. Greg being below me, I knew one of us had better stop climbing. Greg volunteered to continue the climb, much to my relief. He said that he used to climb stuff like this all the time because he grew up in this country, so I stepped aside and let him go past, up the cut.

I was reminded of a mountain goat watching Greg complete the climb to the sheep. He pulled her loose from the rocks she had been caught on and she tumbled most of the way to the bottom while Greg began climbing down. United once again on the canyon floor, I shook his hand and thanked him for saving the day. We took some pictures and shared the moment together while examining the sheep. She was a mature ewe. The obsidian tipped arrow appeared to have sliced through her heart, killing her in seconds. Not wanting the moment to end but knowing it must, I reached for my obsidian knife and started boning out the meat for the pack out.

With loaded packs, we began climbing the game trail out of the canyon. At one of our many rest stops I noticed an antler tine sticking out of a low bush. Hidden beneath the bush was a seven-point elk antler, proving that elk could live in such steep country. Dad felt that the other side could be nearby, so as we worked our way further up the trail we scanned for the other antler. Just off the trail I found two more antlers, both four-point mule deer, one of which appeared to have been shed many years before.

Each time we set afield with bow in hand we face different challenges. I am glad I was able to overcome the challenge of getting close enough to the sheep. I am glad Greg was up to the challenge of climbing up to get the sheep. I look forward to the challenges of hunting I will face in the future, although maybe not those involving cliffs!

Robb Sager finds plenty of challenges hunting from his home in Red Lodge, Montana, where he is a third grade teacher.



Equipment Note:

On this hunt, the author used homemade equipment including a sinew backed Osage bow, river cane shafts, and obsidian arrowheads.

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An Interview With—

Ron LaClair: The Real Deal

By G. Fred Asbell

*“The bow and arrows of days gone by
Live still today through you and I.”*

From “The Legacy,” by Ron LaClair

It makes sense that a diehard archer and bowhunter like Ron LaClair would be born and raised in Michigan. That state has always been in the forefront of the outdoor lifestyle, producing generations of hunters and fisherman and, especially important to us, people like Fred Bear, Will Compton and countless other bowhunting leaders. Michigan archers played a major role in the archery explosion that took place in this country from the 1940s through the 1960s. Ron LaClair was born in 1936, and grew

up hunting deer in Michigan with bow and arrow.

I met Ron for the first time at an archery event at Fox Valley in Aurora, Illinois in the late 1970s. I had just started building and selling Bighorn Bows, he had just opened the Traditional Archery Shoppe, and we both were trying to sell our wares. They likely put us side by side because we were the only traditional vendors, the compound bow having gobbled up most traditional bow companies of any size by then. Ron was in the forefront of what would later be called “the longbow revolution” that sprang to life in the 1980s. At the time, mine was the only traditional company advertising recurve bows, so we talked a lot that weekend. In the ensuing years I’ve gotten to know Ron and realize what an asset he and his dedication to traditional archery have been to all



A younger Ron with a fox he shot on the run.

of us who follow the traditional banner, and what a unique, talented, and interesting individual he is. But you'll have a better appreciation of Ron LaClair if we start at the beginning.

GFA: Tell us about your start in archery.

RLC: My first bow was a little wooden thing with suction cup arrows, and I remember my mother reading Robin Hood to me, and my imagination running wild through Sherwood Forest, battling the sheriff's men, longbow in hand. I'm not sure whether the bow came first or the story of Robin Hood, but I am sure that both were major factors in all that's happened in my life since then. I must have been five or six, and I remember being banished to the outdoors with the bow and arrow in the best interest of my mother's home furnishings. My dad had wood working tools and early on he made me a "proper" bow with arrows, and I was immediately out hunting frogs along the nearby creek. I remember bringing home a couple of frogs and Dad saying if I killed them I should eat them and showing me how to clean them and how to fry them up in a pan. That was almost seventy-five years ago, and I remember every moment of it. It was when I became a hunter.

GFA: And that's probably what got you started as a camp cook. Right? I've witnessed your campfire skills, and you're a heck of a serious cook. And from what I've seen you take particular pride in creating wonderful meals from what you've harvested, from cottontails to buffalo.

RLC: That's probably right. My mom and dad were a big influence on me. In 1945 when I was nine years old I got my



Ron started accumulating trophies for his talented mastery of the bow at a young age, and still shoots with that enormous talent today.

first "real" bow. It was from Montgomery Wards and was, I think, lemonwood. We lived on a farm at that time, and I had a pinto pony named Scout and an Indian costume complete with feathered headdress. With my bow and pony, I roamed the woods and fields shooting imaginary deer and buffalo. A couple of years later when I was eleven, I went to a summer camp in northern Michigan where they had all the things boys loved including swimming, rifle shooting, camp crafts and bow shooting. I, of course, loved the bow shooting and had no interest in going on to the other classes once I'd got a bow and arrow in my hands. At some point the camp counselors called my parents telling them that I didn't want to do anything except shoot the bow, and my dad told them to "just let him shoot the bow then." So I spent all my time at the camp shooting arrows. I remember that I beat everyone's score by at least a hundred points at the end. I still have that diploma, by the way.

We moved back to town in 1948. I no longer had a place to shoot, and my shooting suffered for several years. In 1951 when I was fifteen, I purchased a 52# Par-X all aluminum bow from a secondhand store and shot that for a while, mostly at telephone poles along the railroad tracks close to the house. In 1955, I bought a new 52-pound Bear Kodiak and went bowhunting for the first time in northern Michigan. I was nineteen years old. My Uncle Dallas was a hunting and fishing guide in northern Michigan. He took me to the Jordan Valley State Game area and set me up in what he said was "the perfect place," and it was that. I had my first



Here Ron is performing trick aerial shooting at one of the large traditional gatherings in Michigan.

encounter with a deer, and with buck fever, on that hunt. The arrow didn't come close, and I can still see it all as though it happened yesterday.

GFA: It seems that you've been involved in just about every aspect of archery since the early 1950s. Fill us in.

RLC: Well, as I've said, I picked up a bow in the late forties (that's seventy-five years ago!) and have basically never put it down. I shot and hunted through the fifties as I was coming of age. Nancy and I got married in 1959, and we both loved shooting bows and being outdoors together. The NFAA and field archery were huge in those days, and every community had a course. We traveled all over and shot someplace every weekend. Shooting with a sight was known as free-style and it was very competitive and was where all the best shooters were and, being a competitive sort of fellow, I went for that, although I continued shooting my hunting bow instinctively.

The most prestigious shoot in those days was an indoor event at Cobo Hall in Detroit, which drew archers from all over the world. I shot on the Michigan Team, which was made up of the best shooters in the state, and some of those guys were among the best in the country. I won't go so far as to say that I was, but I was up there with them and part of that team. I was always proud of that.



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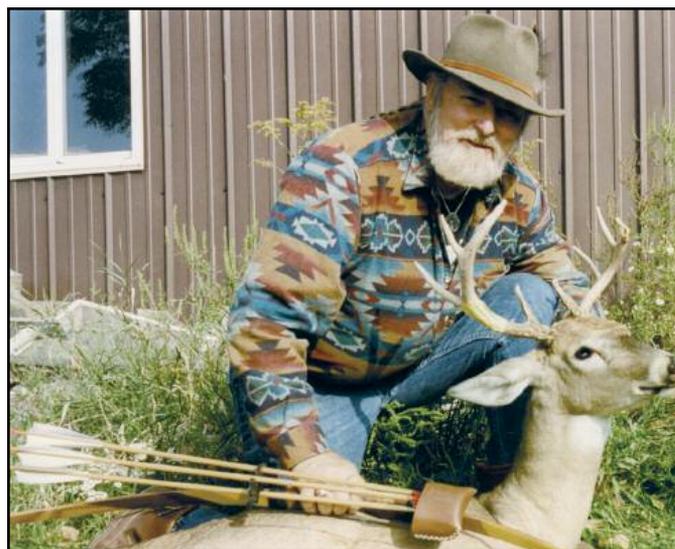
A group of friends at the Michigan Longbowers' annual Rabbit Shoot.

GFA: So you shot a target weight bow with a sight competitively and switched to shooting instinctively during the hunting season? And then you became an exhibition shooter, too? That takes a lot of talent.

RLC: I did it for many years and never had a problem with it, and I guess I never thought of it as anything more than my love for the bow and arrow.

GFA: Going from being a competitive sight-shooter to a longbow proponent is a big step. How did that come about?

RLC: Around 1970 the compound bow came along and totally changed archery. Most people embraced the compound because it was so much easier to shoot and, in the end, made them a better shot. For me, the compound didn't even look like the bow I had loved all my life, and I wanted no part of it. Eventually I dropped out of competitive archery and for the next six or seven years I simply bowhunted with my recurves. Sometime in the late 1970s I came across a



Ron has hunted all over Canada and the United States; however, he loves to hunt the local Michigan deer.

copy of the *Longbow Shooter's Digest*, which was a tabloid-style newspaper sort of thing, dedicated to the old style longbow and Howard Hill. I'd read Hill's *Hunting the Hard Way* and was immediately intrigued by the idea of going back to the basics of the old longbow. I jumped into it head first. I bought a longbow from Howard Hill Archery and took a deer with it that first year. Oh man, was I hooked.

But there wasn't anyone around shooting longbows back then and I started trying to get my friends interested. It took some talking for sure, because the longbow requires a different approach. But eventually a few of my buddies joined in, and we would get together and shoot at local 3D ranges. It was all about Howard Hill back then, and we started shooting at stuff thrown in the air—disks, balls, and coins—like the films showed Howard doing it. A guy named Fred Trost, who had an outdoor TV show, saw us shooting and put footage of me on one of his shows. It sort of took off from there. The publicity was great, and it really got the longbow going. Nancy and I started going to shoots and events again, this time with the longbow. I took along copies of *Longbow Shooter's Digest* to pass around and sell. In 1980 I started up an archery shop in my home, building a small shop on the property in '86, selling just traditional stuff.

GFA: Tell us about winning the World Longbow Championship.

RLC: The championship was held in 1980 in Wilsonville, Alabama, which is just down the road from Howard Hill's home in Vincent, Alabama. Several of us rented a motor home and drove down, having read about the event in the *Digest* I was selling. We had an opportunity to visit Howard's home and see and handle some of his stuff. I put on one of

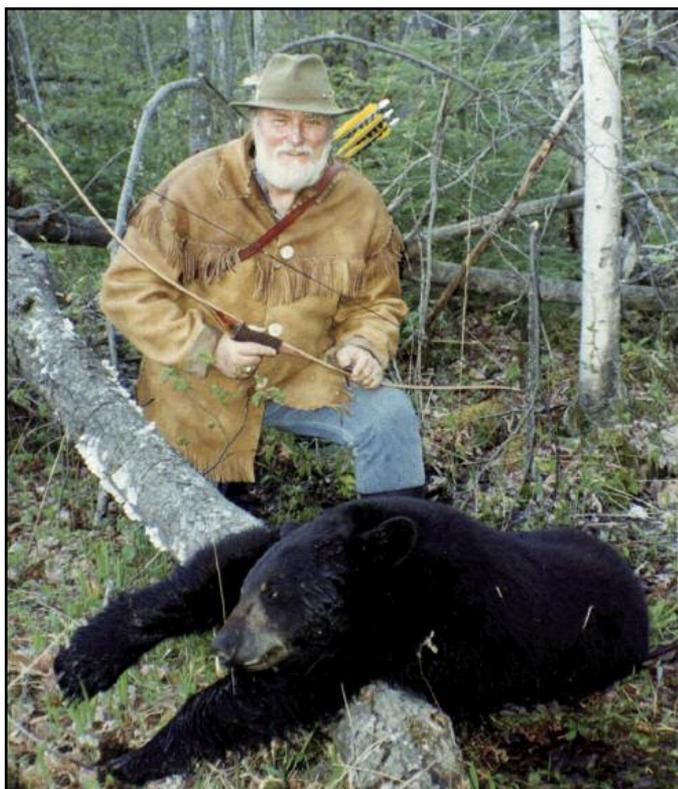
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Ron with a fine Canadian black bear.

his shooting gloves and swear I felt Howard's spirit in it. I was sure I'd win the shoot, which I did. This was a true longbow event and probably a lot different from all the competitive IBO longbow stuff that has come along in the last few years. Not that there's anything wrong with that, but it was different then. I was shooting an 80-pound straight end Hill-style longbow at the time. There weren't a lot of rules, but I don't remember anyone shooting three-fingers-under, or walking the string, and all that stuff. I went back the next year and took second place. Bob Wesley won it that year.

GFA: Had the Michigan Longbow Association already started when you won?

RLC: No, not for a while. After the championship I continued to promote the longbow, doing demonstrations and showing the bows, mostly throughout Michigan. In about '82 we started an indoor longbow league at the Bellevue Conservation Club with about twenty shooters, and that prompted me to start thinking about starting a statewide longbow club. I advertised for longbow shooters to come to a meeting about those ideas and got a good turnout. The Michigan Longbow Association came out of that meeting, and as often happens, the man—me—who called the meeting became the president, holding the office for seven years. The following spring the Bellevue Club hosted the first Michigan Longbow Shoot, which we billed as a turkey shoot, and we were on our way. The popularity of the longbow con-



Not only a showman with the bow and arrow, Ron entertains people in other ways at gatherings.

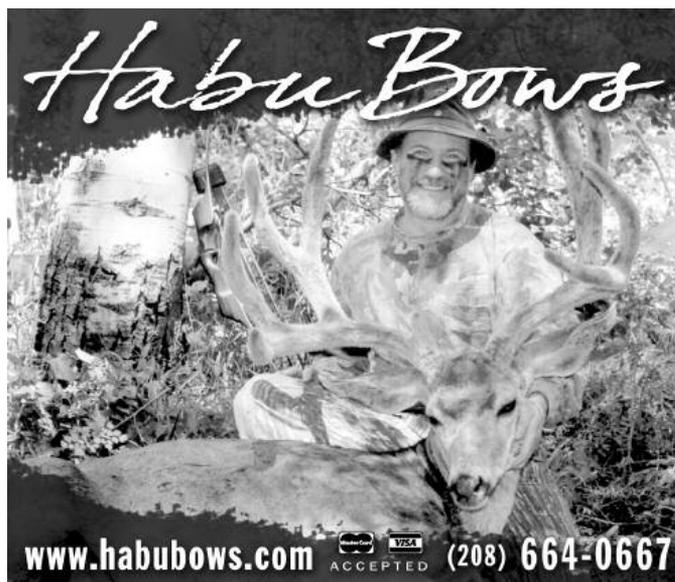
tinued to grow, and in '85 we hosted the Great Lakes Longbow Invitational (now referred to as the GLLI). Within a couple of years it was far and away the biggest longbow event in the world, with people coming from all over the country and from Europe, too.

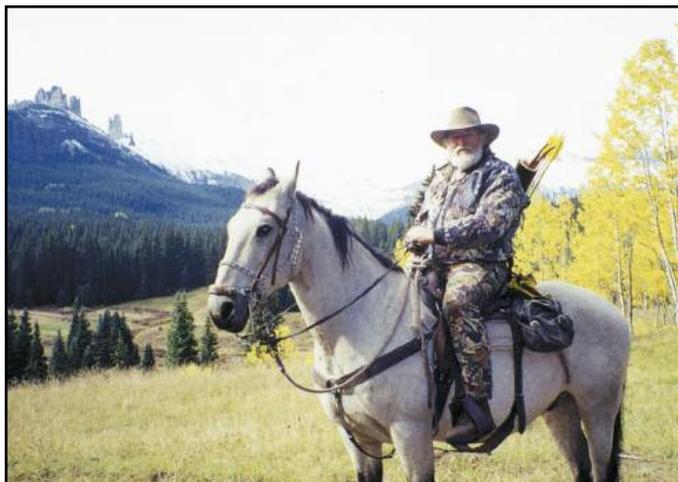
GFA: You were inducted into the Michigan Bowhunters' Hall of Fame and served on the board of Compton Traditional Bowhunters. I think you won the Michigan knife and tomahawk throwing championship several years, too. You are a talented man!

RLC: Probably just too much time on my hands...

GFA: Ron, tell us about your bow, the Shrew.

RLC: Gary Holmes and I came up with the Shrew design back in the early nineties. As much as I loved the longbow and its forgiving nature, there were times when I thought





Hunting elk somewhere in the Rocky Mountains.



Ron and his wife and hunting partner of fifty-seven years, Nancy, taking a break while in the field.

something a little shorter would be good, too. Out of that thinking came the Shrew, which was originally only fifty-two inches long. Now we offer it in various lengths to sixty-two inches, and it has become one of the most popular hunting bows on the market today.

GFA: Speaking of Shrews, what about Shrew Haven?

RLC: Shrew Haven is my hunting camp in Michigan's Upper Peninsula. I've got a cabin on the Brule River that separates Wisconsin and Michigan. Each year a group of my close friends and I get together up there in November, tell lies, and bowhunt deer. It has become a special event, and someone writes about the experience just about every year.

GFA: What bow are you shooting these days?

RLC: I'm shooting Shrews in the forty-five to fifty-pound range, and I haven't had an arrow do anything but zing through animals. There was a time when I thought you had to shoot the heavy stuff. That was part of the Howard Hill legacy, I suppose. I shot seventy-five to ninety-pound bows, and had workout bows that were 100 to 125. I've paid the price for that. Anyone shooting, or trying to shoot, that kind of bow weight is going have to pay the price sooner or later.

GFA: Where and what have you hunted?

RLC: I'm a Michigan whitetail hunter primarily, but I've hunted Wisconsin, Texas, Colorado, Montana, Idaho, Quebec, Ontario, Alaska, and probably some I'm forgetting. I've chased and shot mule deer, elk, caribou, buffalo, and black bears, and I've always hunted a lot of turkeys and small game.

GFA: Tell us about your marriage to your wife, Nancy.

RLC: She has been my "better half" for fifty-seven years. I have depended upon her to keep me on the straight and narrow and call her the railing on my balance beam. When I was a young man looking for my soul mate, the girls I met weren't interested in bows and arrows. When I met Nancy, she told me that her cousin Jack White was the 1953 National NFAA Instinctive champion, and she had attended some of his tournaments. We began shooting together and were married in 1959. She has been my hunting partner and biggest supporter for most of my life.

GFA: I'm not going to let you get away without commenting on your writing. I've heard you recite dozens of original poems, usually at the request of others at various events over the years, and you are darned good. Will you ever put them together and come out with a book? Actually, your voice would be perfect for a DVD.

RLC: Maybe some day...

"What is there about this simple thing that captivates us so? It's only a simple stick and string, it's only a simple bow."

From "The Love of Archery," by Ron LaClair.

G. Fred Asbell serves as the magazine's Shooting Editor. He lives in Michigan with his wife, Teresa.



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Editor's Note:
Readers interested in learning more about Ron and his Shrew bows should visit www.shrewbows.com.

Make Your Own Trade Points

In the early to mid-1800s as settlers pushed westward, one highly sought-after trade item was metal arrow points forged by blacksmiths. These points were traded to numerous Plains tribes and were quickly adopted by any warrior who could obtain them. The hundreds of authentic Plains arrows I've examined in museums across the country were almost always tipped with these metal trade points. Most of these points were simply an elongated triangle with a stem or tang that was inserted into a saw cut and then wrapped with moistened sinew. The tangs sometimes had teeth that helped the sinew grip the point. As the sinew dried it shrank, holding the points securely. When launched from the powerful sinew-backed bows of the horse-mounted Plains warriors, they were capable of felling a 2,000-pound bison with a single shot. In this article, I'll show how to make trade points identical to those used by the Plains warriors.

Replicas of 19th century trade points can still be made today. Flat, high carbon steel works very well, but the easiest material to make trade points from is circular saw blades. Blades come in varying thicknesses, so choose blades made of thicker stock so the trade point will be more robust and durable. A blade that fits in a standard circular saw can be purchased for under \$10 and can make over a dozen trade points.

Be sure to have the proper safety equipment on hand.



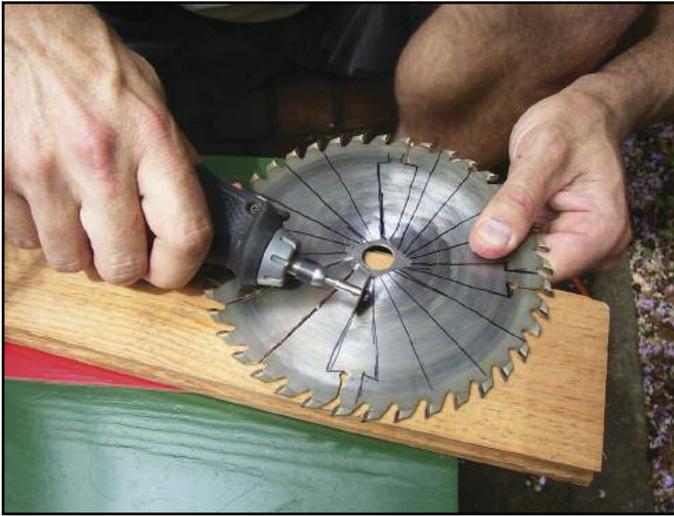
These finished, sharpened trade points are identical to those used by the Plains tribes and are just as deadly.



Black lines on this saw blade indicate where cuts will be made with a Dremel tool. For less than \$8 this blade will make 19 trade points.



Pliers are needed to remove the carbide cutting tips that form the teeth of the blade. If not removed, the carbide tips will groove and damage the grinding wheel.



Cutting the blanks out with a Dremel tool and a ceramic cutting disc.



The trade point blanks. Beware of thin, sharp metal slivers along the freshly cut edge. Leather gloves should be worn to protect the hand from metal splinters.

Safety glasses are essential for protecting eyes from small, high-speed metal fragments that can be thrown from the grinder wheel. Leather gloves should be worn to prevent cuts from metal splinters or sharp metal edges. I also prefer to wear ear protection to prevent hearing damage. Sensible precautions and proper safety gear will prevent injury.

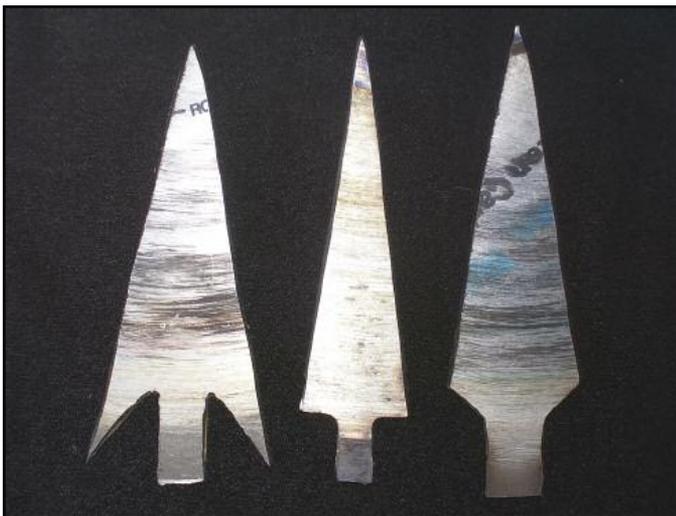
I start by drawing lines from the center of the blade out to the edge, just as you would cut a cake. Then I cut along each line with a Dremel tool tipped with a ceramic cutting disc. An acetylene cutting torch can also be used, but it results in more waste because the torch isn't nearly as precise and the blanks require considerably more shaping due to the excess slag metal that adheres to the edges. The slower but more precise cutting disc is a better option. Once the blanks have been cut out with the disc, beware of small, sharp slivers that hide along the freshly cut edge. These need to be removed so the blanks can be safely handled. Dull and smooth them on a carborundum wheel while grinding the points into their basic shape.

Most saw blades today have small carbide cutting tips spot-welded with brass to the edge of the blade. These are great for longevity of the saw blade, but are a problem for us. They must either be cut off or broken off with pliers. Don't try to grind them off. Carbide is so hard that it won't grind off. Instead, it will cut grooves into the grinding wheel and ruin it. You'll know it if carbide hits the grinding wheel because it won't throw off any sparks.

With the carbide tips removed, the points are then cut and ground to the desired shape. If you intend to use these points for hunting, take into account the game laws in the state in which you intend to hunt. Some states require broadheads without barbs, meaning the angle where the rear of the broadhead meets the arrow shaft must be 90 degrees or greater. This design requirement can be easily met with some simple shaping on the grinder.

Once the points are shaped, the edges can be sharpened on the grinder and the trade points are ready for use.





The finished blanks after shaping, showing the varying profiles used in the 1800s.

However, for me they aren't finished quite yet. For added authenticity, I prefer my trade points to look as if they were made in a forge just like the old ones I've examined. To do that, the blanks must be heated in a fire or with a torch until they are red hot. Heating the blanks burns off any marks or lettering on the blade and blackens its surface. The blanks can then be quenched in water to temper and harden them.

Now the trade points can be sharpened on the grinding wheel. The surface of the points will be black with silver cutting edges along its perimeter, just like the original trade points. Most grinding wheels have a coarse wheel for more aggressive metal removal and a finer wheel for finishing. Use the fine wheel when putting the edges on your trade points. If done carefully the edges can be hunting-ready immediately after being shaped on the grinder. However I prefer to touch them up on a medium-grit sharpening stone. This removes any burrs and trues the edge, but also leaves microscopic serrations that are devastating to vital organs.

The only thing left is to mount the point. Carefully saw a slot into the front of the arrow and insert the point, being sure it's lined up with the shaft and does not wobble when the arrow is spun. The point can then be glued with epoxy or hot melt glue and wrapped with artificial sinew. If you're a primitive purist, use pine sap glue and deer sinew. The only drawback is that primitive bindings aren't waterproof. Otherwise, primitive bindings work well and will withstand incredible abuse. Your handmade trade point is now complete, and the arrows finished off with your own trade points will have a beautifully unique look to them.

Being a traditional archer, I've always had an affinity for a simpler, less complicated hunting experience. And I prefer to make as much of my own hunting equipment as



To remove the silver surface and give the points an authentic iron-forged look, the blanks are heated until they're red hot, then cooled.

possible. There's nothing more satisfying than recreating the weapons used in the past and following the traditions of the ancestors who relied on those weapons to survive.

Billy Berger is a primitive archer from Marietta, Georgia. His fascination with the Stone Age still burns strongly after more than two decades.





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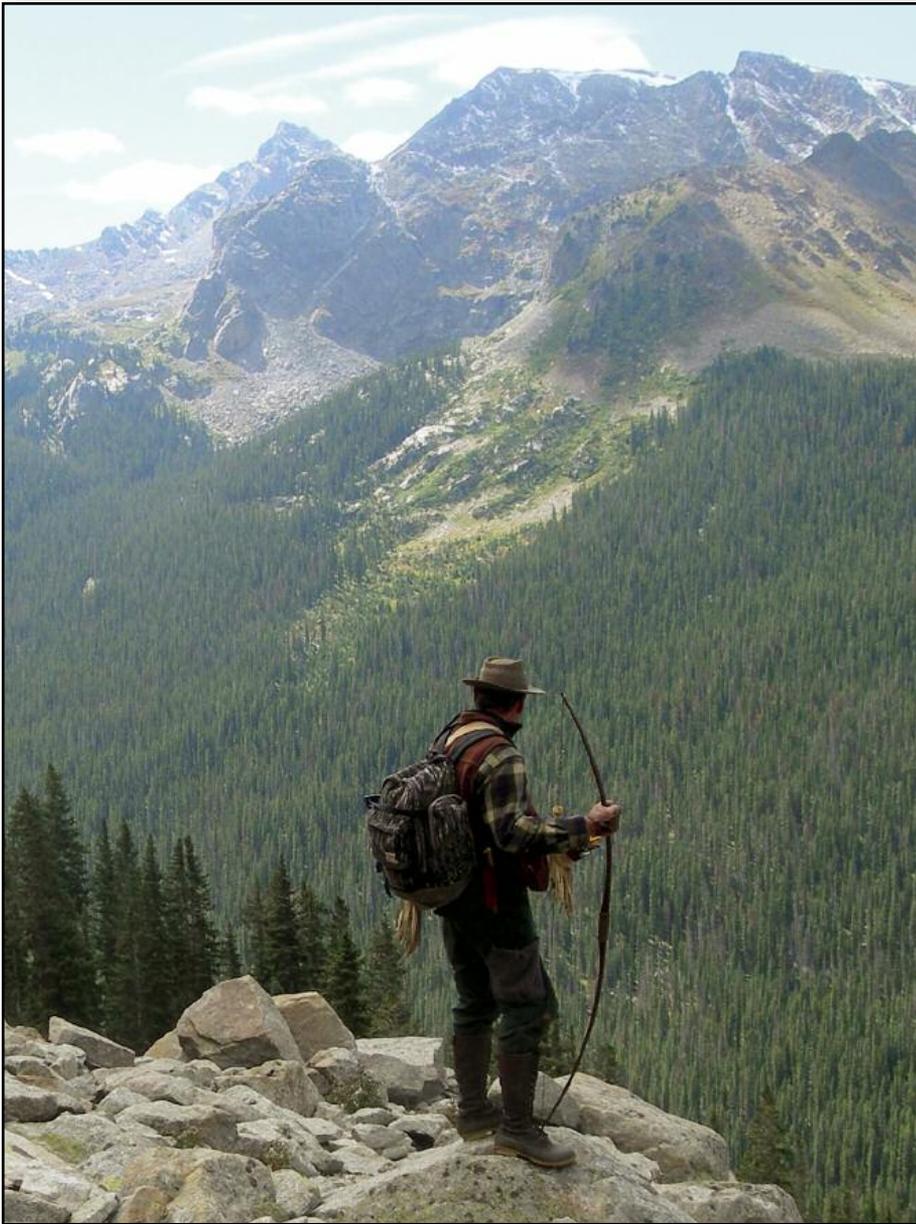
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The Basics



As a very young pilot flying wild and remote country, the fact was hammered into me that if I went down, which was inevitable, the only thing I could count on for survival was knowledge and what I had physically on my body. Extra gear was nice, but things happen quickly and you can't count on anything you don't have on your person. Since that

time I have become habituated in making sure I have a few items on me almost everyday, in town or in the woods. Most backcountry travel demands self-reliance, and even getting into or out of the country has a certain degree of peril. Horses fall, boats sink, and planes crash. A wise hunter always has the basics available to make do at least for a while.

The equipment we can carry into the backcountry is often restricted by weight. Being older and not nearly as driven these days, the experience is worth as much as a harvest to me, so my list has changed over the years. I have been known to carry a mega coffee pot and a cast iron fry pan on a sheep hunt, at least to base camp. No matter how heavy or how light I pack, or whether I'm far from the road or hunting in a buddy's backyard, I always carry the basics on me. Pants with side cargo pockets are a necessity for me for all woods travel, as they provide plenty of room to add items as the situation dictates.

My basic "on me" kit is a cigarette lighter, a sharp pocketknife, and a compass. I carry these every day of my life. If headed to a remote area, ten feet of parachute cord made up in a tight, small bundle and a piece of candle goes along in my pocket.

The compass requirement may confuse you in this modern world of GPS and cell phones, but neither of those is on my personal list of "have to have" survival gear. It took me a while to understand the term, upon hearing of the fad of "bugout kits." After checking into this I was amazed or rather appalled at what was considered necessity, especially the solar panels to keep the iPad and cell phone charged. These days a sat phone is considered indispensable and can be very handy, but basic knowledge in wilderness craft and a few tools to get you by are more important.

There are excellent windproof lighters now, and I have always meant to get one but continue to carry just a pack of Bic butanes. Unless you are

Backcountry means self reliance.



A small, ultralight teapot is a great addition to wilderness travel.

dealing with very high altitude or extreme cold winter temperatures, they work and are light and small. In my main hunt pack or fanny pack, I carry several spares and a magnesium fire starter kit, but I could lose that in a river crossing or crash. The lighter might need shaking dry, but it is always in my pocket. In very cold weather, I add to my pocket stash a small waterproof vial of “strike anywhere” matches and the magnesium fire starter.

I am also aware of the best local tinder and generally think about the issue of fire long before I need to start one. Birch bark is my favorite tinder, as it will burn green, whether wet or dry, and some species can usually be found near streams from Florida to the Yukon. Use the candle for sustained heat until the fire is going. Remember the secret to fire is starting with a little one that can breathe and then adding to it as it burns. The biggest mistake is adding too much and too big. It’s wise to practice with the magnesium starter before you really need it.

For daily use I either have a custom Tony Bell folding “Barlow” or folding

Case trapper on my belt. In town I might swap to a small folding Gerber in my pocket. When hunting I usually wear a sheath knife that slides in and out with one hand and is used for a million things. No knife is any good if it is not sharp.

My favorite compass is an old Boy Scout model in my right pocket attached to a leather bootlace from my pants belt loop. I don’t want to lose it. A spare is in my daypack. You may think in this technologically advanced world a simple compass is not important, but I think otherwise. I have way more faith in the sun, moon, stars, and magnetic poles to stay on station than satellites, batteries,

and chips. A compass won’t do you any good if you don’t know anything about navigation, which is becoming a lost art as we blindly follow directions from a synthetic voice, no matter the occasional absurdity of the directions.

I believe basic navigation is a necessary skill for woodsmen. If you don’t have a clear understanding of how to stay oriented and get from point “A” to “B” with natural navigation or a compass, get a simple book on the subject and study it. Backcountry navigation is a basic life skill along with knots and fire building.

I *always* know where north is, whether in the air, underwater, or in the

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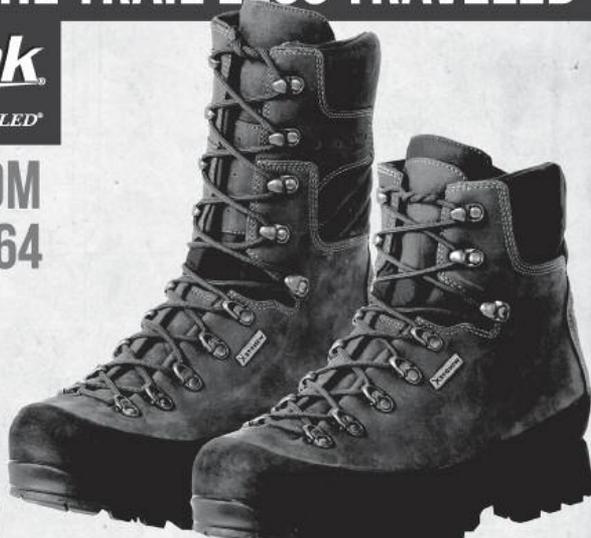
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MOUNTAIN EXTREME



The author's bare essentials for venturing out into the backcountry.

mountains. It is the secret to not getting lost. Many times arriving in a strange city after a flight, I have taken the map from the hotel phone book, walked out on the street, and re-orientated my internal compass. If you always know where north is, you also know east, south and west. Even close to home coming out of a known woods patch, I

will stop, pull my compass, check north, get oriented, and note any visible signs such as known terrain features or the location of moon before blasting off. Many a night we have done quite a bit of "hooting" and searching some pretty small wood patches for hunters who should have known better. In remote country where you may not be able to

walk to a road for directions, staying oriented and always knowing your location as well as camp's can be the difference in life and death. GPS is nice, but a compass is a must.

We often hear about visualization concerning shooting the bow, but it is important in navigation also. You should be able to study a topo map, orient to north, place your position, and visualize the lay of the land. If there is a vantage point you can do the same without a topo just by looking over the country. Hold that vision of the country as you travel. Check your position frequently at identifiable locations. Never just stumble along without a clear idea of location and direction. The tiny screen on a personal GPS doesn't give you that sense of place. What if you lose it or it just quits? I have used GPS as the primary navigational tool on working boats and aircraft for years and have had to fall back on my magnetic compass on more than one occasion. Always keep where north is in your mind.

There is a lot of other basic "stuff" we

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A lot of bush planes go down every year, so be prepared.

could use, and I usually carry it in a fleece daypack or small dry bag. Usually a means of having coffee is pretty high up on my list. I leave a remote camp with a full water bottle, spare wax candle, spare reading glasses, extra wool socks, rain gear, cord, ultra-light small tarp, a half dozen cliff bars, a small ultra-light teapot (thanks for the tip Dick and Yote Robertson!), a small Leatherman type tool, a 6" high quality file, a small coarse and medium diamond hone, spare compass, dental floss and a large needle for repair.

In Alaska, I also pack a small belt ax that's fairly lightweight. I have it in a belt sheath, but it generally rides on my daypack until needed. Here again it is no good unless it's sharp enough for alternate uses, such as an ulu for skinning. With it I can quickly make a pile of spruce boughs for cover or a bed, blaze a trail to camp for easy use in the dark, or quickly make high quality kindling. When the continent was all backcountry a small axe was the primary universal survival tool.

When flying as a passenger in a bush plane, I keep this pack between my feet

where it's handy, in the hope of holding on to it if we do go down unscheduled. An awful lot of bush planes go down during hunting season every year in Canada and Alaska. Be prepared. In a raft or canoe it is tied to something that will float close at hand, but always I have the essential kit in my pocket. If I get out with my pants, I'm good to go.

Besides the knife, lighter, and compass the most valuable tool I carry is knowledge. Hunters used to be the supreme naturalists, but this has changed as we lose our backcountry to roads and become more technology dependant. One of the joys of being on a remote hunt should be the time away from our modern technology and speeded up lives to observe the earth at our feet and the night sky overhead and try once again to become a part of the earth's whole while we improve our wilderness skills. Even backpacking, I will carry a small plant book or maybe a book on birds. The more you know the less you will need. Sometime, check out a Plains Indian arrow quiver at a museum. He carried all he needed for life attached and was home wherever he lay. Oh, the knowledge we have lost.

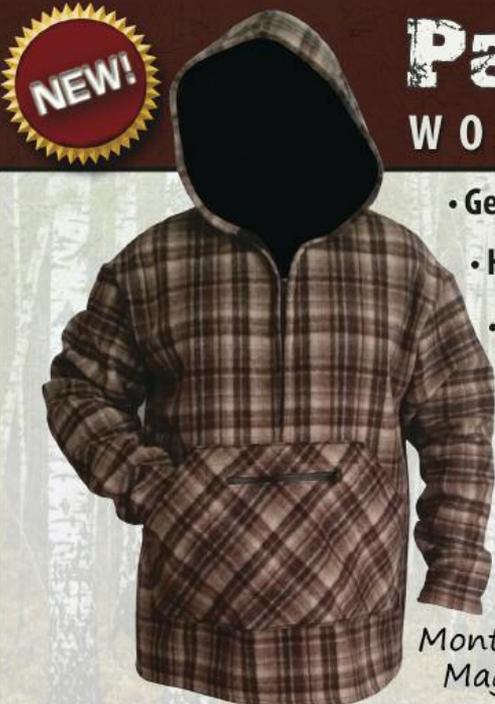
A Vietnam veteran combat pilot, regular contributor Sterling Holbrook and his wife Krista divide their time between Fairbanks, Alaska and Hawaii.





Pathfinder

WOOL PULLOVER



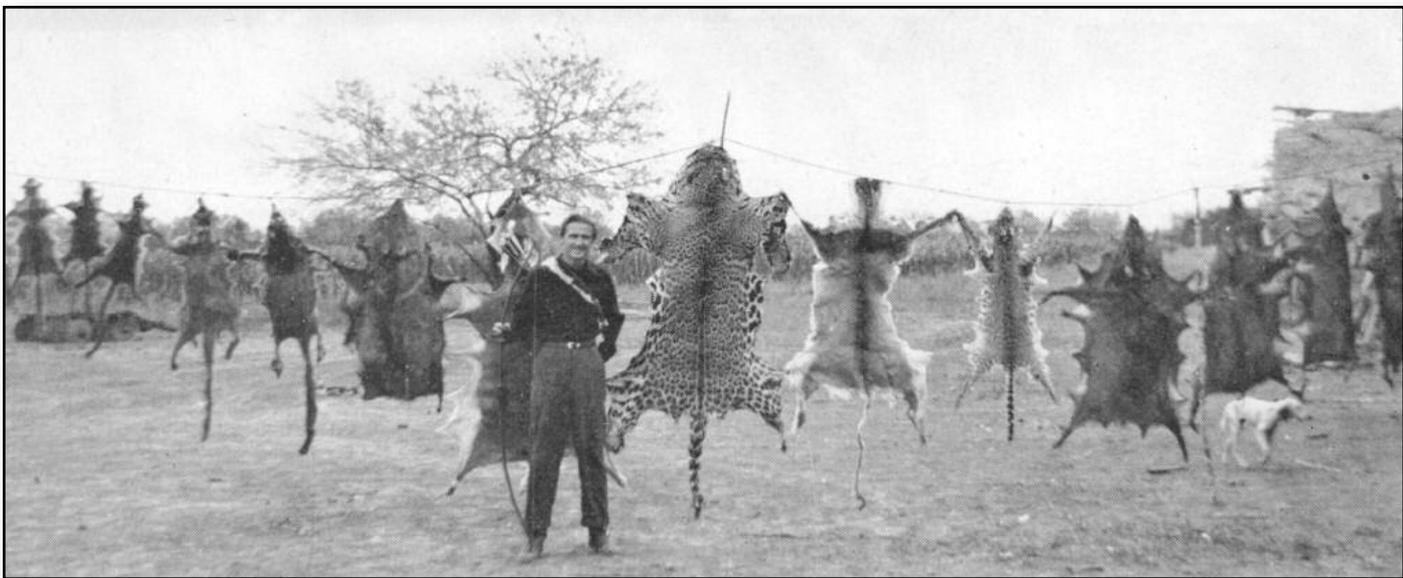
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Ande Vail's Mexican Safari

Although he is not as well known as the Wilhelm Brothers and never achieved the fame of Howard Hill, Ande Vail was nonetheless one of the finest trick shot artists of the 1940s. His specialty was making short films showing his prowess with a bow. In one of these he shoots dainty sandwiches out of a lady's hand, breaks balloons attached to her feet while she swings and (more or less) sinks the Japanese battlewagon *Hirohito* with a single well-placed arrow.

All of Vail's shorts had themes (usually rather corny ones) and a feature titled *Jaguar* was no exception. Filmed in color and sound to highlight the lush surroundings, the story line is about the adventures of an oil magnate's daughter who is lost in the jungle. Her rescuer, of course, is Vail, cast as an archer/ornithologist who is searching the wilds for little-known bird specimens.

Besides being a deadly shot, Vail was also an expert bowhunter. He amply proved this while filming *Jaguar* in January of 1944, when he and his cam-

eraman drove to Tampico, Mexico in a Plymouth station wagon loaded down with bows, arrows, and photography gear. The duo arrived in a cold, pouring rain—not ideal weather to start filming, but a lot better than the freak blizzard raging through Texas at the time.

The production would be centered at a large sunflower ranch about 200 miles north of Mexico City on the outskirts of a dense jungle. Although not a full-length feature film, *Jaguar* was evidently a sizable undertaking, since there were several cameramen, a business manager and a work crew of forty locals involved.

The first problem they faced was that the dim jungle light filtering through the thick canopy of trees and the natural camouflage proved to be unsuitable for filming, due to the limitations of the

equipment of that era. The crew was therefore tasked with building a huge corral in a more open area for some of the scenes. This delay allowed several opportunities for Vail and his guide to go out into the wilds around the ranch and do some javelina hunting.

"Within an hour," the writer of the account, Art Schampel, relates, "the dogs chased three into a clearing. These pigs are mean and ornery, and while Ande was attempting to get real close one of them charged him.

"When the pig was less than twenty yards away an arrow hit him almost in the eye, burying itself in the skull. The pig stopped momentarily and then almost blinded charged ahead only to be met with another arrow in his skull only an inch and a half from the first arrow. Even this failed to stop the pig and Ande was forced to jump clear of the charge. Ande nocked another arrow before the pig had time to charge again and this

Ande Vail stands with his bow and arrow before what is perhaps a record kill for modern archery. The game shown here was taken over a two-month hunting expedition in Old Mexico. Most of the skins here are from predatory and carnivorous animals. Left to right: five Mexican raccoons, javelina, deer, jaguar, puma, tigreia, and the balance javelina.

time the arrow went through the heart and the pig was down for good.”

Puncturing the perturbed porker, however, didn’t mean that the party was “out of the woods” just yet.

“The other two pigs evidently figured to ‘get’ the archer by ganging up on him,” the chronicler continues, “for both of them came on together only a few yards apart. The leader ran squarely into an arrow which penetrated to thenock in his neck, dropping him within five or six yards. The second pig by then was too close for Ande to get another arrow on the string, so again he had to jump high and wide in a hurry. Just as the pig stopped and wheeled another shot at close range hit him low behind the shoulder. The arrow passed through completely, stuck into the earth, and the pig went down in a heap as though his feet were knocked out from under him.”

While Vail chose the bow and arrow, the people native to the area had a different way of procuring their pork. Their method involved live trapping followed by some exciting “hands-on” tactics.

When a local wild pig was spotted near its den, hunters and dogs would chase it into the small cave in the ground where it lived.

“Once inside,” Schampel writes, “the openings are then blocked with logs. A hole just large enough to allow a pig to be drawn through is then cut in the soft wood. After long manipulation with a lariat a pig is finally roped by the hind



Ande holding two coatimundi. These vicious little animals killed two dogs on the expedition.

legs through the newly-cut opening... and makes a reluctant exit, nose last.

“As soon his shoulders appear, two pairs of hands grab him around the neck, high up to prevent him from reducing the population of Mexico. The pig’s forelegs are then tied, while woe be to the person that slacks up on the lariat holding his hind legs. Both fore and hind legs are then lashed together and the pig muzzled. Then as a last event he is given an upside-down pole ride.”

Vail also faced off against a large variety of other game during the filming, including several Mexican raccoons. These animals, which are close cousins of our own familiar ‘coon, are correctly known as coatimundi, and evidently have the same nasty disposition



The Mexican tigreia resembles the jaguar, only much smaller.

as our ringtail when cornered or threatened.

“This ferocious little creature when treed is a bundle of dynamite,” Schample writes. “They are easily recognized by their very long tails. Forepaws are equipped with long, hooked claws. One of these animals which an arrow knocked out of a tree, fell into the dog pack, killing two of them before being subdued.”

There was a puma, also taken with an aerial shot, but no details were given. Vail, who was hunting alone at the time, described it as “just another tree shot.”



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In the film itself, there is a scene where a 12-foot boa constrictor threatening the heroine is dispatched with one of Ande's arrows. Another deadly snake is skewered through the head as it's about to strike the sleeping girl. A huge croc "on the heels" of a native is also stopped in the nick of time by an arrow through the back of its neck. (Some of these scenes are a bit reminiscent of, and possibly inspired, the filming of an African safari adventure by another famous archer not too many years later.)

Possibly the most exciting hunting Vail did in Mexico was shooting a jaguar at night some years before the filming. Schampel describes the action in colorful terms as it was related by Vail while they were in the planning stages of their present trip:

"Dogs are barking, their noses pointing upward; two of them are almost climbing a tree in their excitement and frenzy. Then a hideous snarl—a cruel slobbering snarl filled with hate—a beam of light shines upward. Instantaneously another beam shines upward. The lights converge revealing

two brilliant eyes, set wicked and baleful in a vicious, cat-like head—Jaguar!

"A quick, swishing sound, a rustle in the branches – the unseen arrow has hit near the shoulder, completely penetrating the body and losing itself in the jungle night. The vicious head in a movement quick as lightning is at the shoulder with curled-back lips and bared teeth snapping at the wound. The jaguar loses balance, but catches the limb with front legs and claws...

"Another arrow speeds upward and strikes with an almost crackling sound. A clean hit in the spinal column ... severing the vertebrae. It is a killing shot with the jaguar dropping to the ground and the now nearly insane dogs immediately swarm over him."

By the time the filming of *Jaguar* was over Vail had taken what was called "perhaps a record kill for modern archery and a bow and arrow." These included the Mexican raccoon, javelina, deer, jaguar, pumas, and "tigreja" (probably an ocelot), as well as the aforementioned snakes, crocodile, and other ferocious fauna menacing the film's heroine.

In summing up his adventure in the Mexican jungle, Ande shares the following bit of personal philosophy with the reader:

"I sincerely wish that every archer someday will be as fortunate as I was. To be able to hunt where game is plen-

tiful, for when he does he will conclusively prove to himself and to his friends that given the opportunity he will get results."

Some writers of that era compared Vail favorably to the much more famous Howard Hill. One present-day blogger, in fact, states "I have been told there where trick shots that he could do that Howard Hill could not do...", yet scouring the Internet to find more information on this talented Bowman turns up very little. One item, a short newspaper clipping from November of 1943, gives us a hint as to his proficiency with the bow. Titled "*Archery Artist*," it reads:

"An exhibition of trick shooting with the bow and arrow by Ande Vail of Los Angeles, whose skill as an archer has been employed in 15 movies, entertained soldiers at the army base at Salt Lake yesterday. Outdoing William Tell, Vail shot an apple and then a small box of matches off the head of Mrs. Verne Tritten, and then shot an arrow through a small cube of sugar at 25 feet."

Another clipping titled *Five Archery Experts Will Try Out For Deer* mentions him in what was evidently one of Utah's first experiments in using the bow and arrow to hunt big game. It lists Vail as a participant, along with several more of the West's finest bowmen of the era: Stew Foster, Walt Wilhelm, Dave Davis and Ken Moore.

There are also chapters on Vail in two books: *The Traditional Way* by Fred Anderson and *Legends of Archery* by Peter Stecher. One of Vail's archery shorts is available on YouTube at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_awT_WzyH7Q

A regular contributor to our *Traditional Archives* column, Duncan Pledger lives in Milton, Wisconsin.



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Late summer in Missouri brings the promise of many things. Archery season is just around the corner, which means preparing food plots, hanging stands, shooting, trimming lanes—and ticks! If you've spent any amount of time outside, more than likely you've been the unfortunate host to the dinner plans of one of the many types of ticks located in North America. No matter how hard you try to avoid them, they always seem to find a way to latch on.

According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, seven different types of ticks are found in North America. The two most prominent in Missouri, at least in my neck of the woods, are the American dog tick and the Lone Star tick.

My interest in these nasty little creatures was non-existent until three years ago when I was diagnosed with Rocky Mountain spotted fever (RMSF). A recurrence of the disease just over a year ago hit me harder than the first. During the second go around, doctors discovered that I had also contracted ehrlichiosis as well as babesiosis. Both diseases are transmitted by the bite of a tick, and both show their nasty little heads through symptoms similar to that of RMSF.

If you have never dealt with the wrath of RMSF and what it does to your body, consider yourself lucky! My first experience with the disease caused terrible muscle aches. A typical 10-day recommended treatment course of doxycycline didn't seem to touch it. Three months later, I was back in the hot seat, feeling worse than before. Finally, after six months of doxy, twice a day, every

Top right—Many manufacturers offer different sprays containing permethrin.

Right—Small seed ticks that the author collected off his clothing using a lint roller.



Stepping Outside

By Josh Carter

day, I was feeling well again and my blood work was reading normal.

Fast forward two years down the road and I'm beginning to see a recurrence of my original symptoms from three years prior, except this time there's more. My biceps, forearms, face, and hands have a terrible tingling sensation. The best comparison for this would be that feeling you have when

you have slept on your arm the wrong way, when you wake up and it slowly comes back to life. That's how both of my arms felt, all day long. What scared me more than that was how quickly my mind and my ability to function succumbed to the invasion of my body. Within three days of realizing what was going on, I was struggling to read. On day four I was struggling to talk, and by





Not your typical fashion statement, but if it prevents the bite of an infected tick, it's worth it!

the fifth day I struggled to hold my head up to look at my wife and kids.

After visiting with a specialist on day six, another six-month round of doxycycline lay in my future. I felt that the medication had made me feel badly before, but it was either take it or die!

Twelve months have passed since then. I am glad to report that I'm currently RMSF free, but I still deal with some of the effects of the toll that it took.

Before my illness it was not unusual for me to return home from a trip to the farm with a tick or two. It was also not

unusual during July and August to get into a nest of seed ticks, which could mean hundreds if not thousands of ticks at a time. Seed ticks, as I call them, are the larval stage of ticks after they hatch. Brushing up against one wrong branch could spell disaster.

Since my unwanted education on what the bite of an infected tick can cause, I have developed a process for avoiding them that has resulted in only one tick on my skin in the past twelve months.

There are numerous types of spray products out there that claim to kill or repel ticks. Many of us have used them and probably have several cans of them sitting on our shelves. DEET and picaridin are two of the most popular active ingredients in most of these sprays. I have used both of these products alone as well as together, with little to no success at all with ticks.

At the recommendation of the specialist who treated me, and through personal trial, I have found the most effective sprays to be those that contain permethrin. Most products labeled with

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permethrin as their active ingredient state that a single application to clothing will last after several wash cycles, making these sprays more cost efficient because you'll use less product. Apply to your clothing the night before you head out, let it dry overnight, and you are good to go. Do not apply permethrin directly to your skin—it's meant to treat clothing.

I have personally witnessed ticks crawl across clothing treated with permethrin, make their way half way across the application site, and fall to the ground dead. Another benefit of this product is that some manufacturers offer spray in an odorless form, so it's safe to use while hunting.

Another weapon that I have added to my arsenal is the lint roller. That may sound funny, but seed ticks are extremely difficult to see and even harder to pick off of your pants leg. A few swipes of the lint roller will leave no second-guessing about whether or not you've missed any tiny ticks.

The last part of my system includes rubber boots and duct tape. When I'm hanging stands or running the tractor, I'm always wearing jeans to protect my legs. By tucking the legs of my jeans into my boots and then sealing them off with duct tape, ticks and other pests cannot crawl down into my boots and are forced to cling to my pants, where the permethrin will take care of them.

Taking these additional steps to protect yourself from ticks could prevent you or one of your loved ones from having to deal with effects of any of the serious illnesses they can transmit.

Josh Carter resides in southeastern Missouri, where ticks are plentiful, with his wife and two children. Spending time in the outdoors and chasing white-tails with a stick and string are his true passions.



Dealing with Tick Bite

Ticks can carry a lot of nasty diseases in addition to the three mentioned in this article, including Lyme disease and typhus. Josh Carter quite correctly points out that the best way to avoid them is to keep from being bitten by a tick in the first place. But what if you're checking your skin after returning from a hunt (as you should do during warm weather tick season) and find one attached to your skin?

The first thing to do is to get rid of the tick, the sooner the better. The risk of acquiring a tick-borne illness increases the longer the tick remains attached. Most of the methods recommended back when we were kids don't work very well, including covering the tick with oil or applying a burning cigarette or recently extinguished match to its body.

Use a pair of fine-tipped tweezers to remove the tick. (Tweezers designed specifically for this purpose are available from many retail outlets.) Grasp the tick's head as close to the skin as possible, gently enough to avoid crushing it but firmly enough to maintain contact. Pull slowly, at right angles to the skin. Maintain traction until the tick comes free (which may take a while). Wash the area with rubbing alcohol, iodine, or warm soap and water. Don't touch the tick with your fingers. Dispose of it safely.

A newer product called the Tick Key offers an alternative to tweezers for this process. I have no experience with it, but friends report that it's quite effective. If you hunt in areas with a lot of ticks (or a high incidence of tick-borne illness), carry an appropriate tick removal device in your hunting pack.

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Prelude

By Kevin Kennedy

It must have been the magazine ads that got me. I had never shot a real bow and knew no one who hunted with or even owned one, but I knew I needed one with the soul deep certainty with which a goose knows to head South in the fall. I had no choice.

I got my first recurve when I was fourteen. It was 62 inches of beautiful. I loved everything about it—its color, the feel of the grip. Even the name, Wing Falcon, implied speed and grace.

Chuck at Ye Olde Archery Shoppe had my Falcon hanging among less comely bows on the rack behind the cash register with a sticker that read \$42.00. With tax the cost soared to over \$44.00. Add three fiberglass arrows, because everyone needs some “good” arrows, and three more wood arrows for practice, and it seemed that I was always going to be about ten lawns from being able to afford it.

My buddy Bruce had his eye on a bow too. Looking at us, Chuck could see our angst, or possibly a long and profitable relationship, either way. He set us up with a time payment plan. We couldn't take the bows with us until they were paid in full, but we could shoot for free in his basement range. It was a five-mile bike ride each way from my house to Chuck's shop, but it was worth the effort to spend the spring and early summer shooting and just han-

dling that graceful, sensuous piece of art.

When I finally handed over the last five dollar bill to pay off that bow, I shot a lot. I had read that shooting at small targets was important, so Bruce and I shot at dandelions, matchbooks, and bottle caps scattered around the lawn. We scoffed at the occasional archery article with pictures of well-dressed people shooting at three-foot round, multicolored straw targets on easels. While we shot from the garage roof, or kneeling under my mom's rhododendron, the ad people were always on a lawn. Weenies!

We had constant bruises on our arms and hard calluses on our fingers, because we wouldn't waste our arrow money on armguards or tabs. But we were good. I have probably never shot as well as I did in those days.

My bow always had a faint, lemony, furniture polish smell, because if I wasn't shooting, I felt that a committed archer like me should be polishing my bow.

We shot daily in our yards, but frequently we'd go to “the tracks.” That was close enough to reach on our bikes in a half hour. The tracks was a railroad right of way with pastures, swamps, and a few acres of woods. It ran from 72nd all the way to 84th street, but on each end the last couple of hundred yards were pretty tame and had barking dogs.

For a couple of boys living in town, this was a portal to the wild. Our wilderness, like our targets, was small, but it was real. There was the possibili-

ty of rabbits. We sometimes found coon tracks. We got to know the look and sound of different hawks, found a snag where a screech owl lived, and once we argued for a week over whether that little almost robin looking bird was a Rufus Sided Towhee, or Rufus Sighted Towhee, its red eyes adding to the confusion. It took a bike ride to the Fern Hill library to settle that debate.

I shot my first “big” game at the tracks—a bullfrog. Frog legs and butter sizzling in a mess kit fry pan over a backyard fire might as well have been Dall sheep ribs on a Brooks Range mountainside, and maybe the best thing I'd eaten.

Once, I fell off my bike on the way to the tracks. I don't recall what caused the crash, but I do remember the nick in the finish of my bow, the huge gash as I called it at the time. That bow was made of wood and magic. Along with my bike, it transported me from my normal neighborhood to the wilds of the Yukon. Now I'd ruined it.

Surprisingly, despite the wound it shot as well as ever, so the pain I suffered from doing injury to my bow faded over the summer and early fall. It was still beautiful, but now it was more a hunter's bow, with history and character.

That December, an amazing thing happened. Bruce and I asked our parents to let us go hunting during Christmas break, and they said okay. No kid who ever asked for a car, a trip to Disneyland, or a horse and was granted their wish was ever more surprised or excited.

My dad agreed to drop us in a meadow about an hour south of town along with our camping gear and bows. Bruce's dad would pick us up three whole days later. Fred Bear and Jack O' Connor had nothing on us.

I'd hunted deer before, but never for



two consecutive days—and never with a bow. My hunting partners, my dad and my uncles, hunted three days a year. The deer season was two weeks long. With work six days a week, the math was easy. I started going one day a year when I turned nine and all three days at twelve. By age fourteen, I'd carried a rifle for two years but had never seen a legal buck.

Bruce had never actually hunted deer, but he worked part time after school at a taxidermy shop. This gave him an aura of expertise that rivaled and some days exceeded my six days spent carrying a bolt action .30-30 around Olympic Peninsula clearcuts.

This trip though, was taking things to a new level. Not only were we going camping in December by ourselves, but we'd be bowhunting deer! Despite only having seen a handful of bucks in my life and none during a hunting season, visions of giant blacktail bucks nearly overwhelmed me. There were few designated bow seasons in those days, but the archery regulations allowed hunters to shoot does. Bruce and I very seriously discussed our plan to pass all kinds of bucks and settle for a "meat doe" on the last day if the right buck didn't show. "Would a two-point do on the second day or was that a morning of the third day buck?" The anticipation was delicious.

Despite Bruce's tenure at the taxidermy shop, I had not only killed that bullfrog with my bow but I had once shot a rabbit with a .22. I felt pretty certain my experience would trump Bruce's ability to judge trophy quality. Bruce pointed out that I had failed 100% of the time while deer hunting thus far, and he would surely have two mounts in his room if he'd had all the chances to hunt that I did. The stakes were high. I didn't know if I could survive if Bruce got a bigger buck than me

on this trip.

That was a wonderful first deer camp. We cooked meals on a Coleman stove and splashed around trying to grab splotchy, toothy, rotting, spawning coho salmon from a creek. We walked logging roads in the dark hoping to hear a coyote or an owl, and, though neither of us would ever admit it, to confront our unspoken fear of the woods at night.

Our tent collapsed one night due to rain and wind, requiring us to set it back up and run lines to nearby trees to shore up the flimsy, and now broken, aluminum frame. When we climbed back into our sleeping bags with the tent ugly but standing, we felt as proud and competent as though we'd designed and built a suspension bridge. We were cold, wet, sometimes scared, and completely exhilarated.

On the last morning I saw a deer—a doe, maybe even a fawn of the year, but a deer—and that was why I was there. Everything about the minimum size buck we'd planned to take had evaporated before my dad had driven away three days before.

She was close, easily within range, but with no gap to thread an arrow between the crosshatch of alder and naked vine maples. Aware of something or someone nearby, she looked nervous. I had an arrow nocked and my fingers were tight on the string as we shared that brush patch. Her ears flicked around as she tried to figure out why she was uneasy and I fought to control my tremors.

I have no idea how long I got to spend with that deer, but I owe her. The awakening of the ancient in me took place in that Pierce County tree farm. I never drew my bow before she took a few steps, further obscuring my view, and then raised her tail and bounded away. I heard her long after she disap-

peared from sight. Bruce wouldn't believe me at first, I had to swear on my dog Nikki that I'd seen a deer.

When Bruce's dad arrived that afternoon to take us home, it was just days before Christmas. Nothing under the tree would compare with what we'd found in our first deer camp.

Someday we'd come home with meat and antlers as well as stories, but for now we knew we had crossed a line that we'd never uncross. We couldn't drive, didn't shave, and were just beginning to realize that girls were more interesting than we'd previously thought, but we'd connected with the past and our own innate nature.

We weren't yet men, but we were hunters.

Kevin Kennedy grew up in Tacoma, Washington. He and his buddies started bowhunting the local blacktail deer in the 1960s. Kevin and his wife Laurie still live in the Puget Sound area, where they are learning to be grandparents to Avery and Finn.



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Public Lands: An American Idea at Risk

By Gregg Bafundo

It's September. My pack is packed, my bow strung, and a sense of anticipation hangs in the air. I pack up my rig and hit the road. Five hours later at the trailhead, I stand in total disbelief reading the sign that says, "The areas behind this sign are closed to the public." How can this be? This is a Federal Wilderness Area created by an act of Congress. Then I remember a story I read about federal land transfers. When I get home, I do a little research and find out that my favorite hunting area was transferred to state ownership last spring. When the state couldn't find the funds to maintain it, they sold it to a holding company headquartered in Dubai. A little more research reveals to my horror that mil-

lions of acres of federal lands across the nation have fallen to this same fate. Now I'm locked out, forever.

While the story above is largely fiction, it's only fiction in part. There is an effort across the West to sell off our public lands under the guise of better management and states' rights. While I'm one of the first to admit that much of the management I see on our federal lands is suspect at best and could use some serious aggressive changes, throwing the baby out with the bath water is not the way to go about these changes. In fact, it probably would make the "problem" even worse.

Where I live in the Okanogan, in Washington State, we've had two years of horrible fire seasons. The interesting thing about these fires—something the land sell-off advocates are neglecting to mention—is that the majority of acreage burned last year was private land. The largest fire last year was actually started by a logging crew working on reservation land because the U.S. Forest Service had rightly closed the land it manages to logging because of the extreme fire danger.

The same folks who promote the land transfer agenda have openly admitted that it's really not about the rights of individual states or management, but about selling off our lands to the highest bidder. Think about the implications of this—our hunting grounds gone, for us and future generations. No more hunting, scouting, fish-



ing, and hiking. Our legacy and heritage could soon be gone because of greed, ignorance, and radical ideology. The North American Model of Conservation will also be but a memory.

I spent almost ten years defending my country as a Marine. I remember many days while deployed dreaming of big wild places, but even more importantly I remember those places belonging to all Americans, not just a few and in this case maybe not even Americans at all. Imagine the Bob Marshall Wilderness in Montana belonging to a Russian mining company or Dolly Sods in West Virginia being owned by a corporation from Venezuela, the White Mountains, the Okefenokee, the Brooks Range all gone. The idea of transferring or selling these lands, our history and our heritage is so un-American that sportsmen everywhere should be willing to stand up and fight this. In fact we must, unless we want our legacy to be the generation that lost hunting.

I consider myself pretty lucky. I live out West in the middle of the Okanogan National Forest. I routinely have deer, bear, and elk on my property. In fact, I killed my whitetail 200 feet from my front door. I also know that most of us aren't so lucky. Many readers of this magazine have to plan for the trip of a lifetime when they come out West to hunt. Imagine if that opportunity no longer existed. What would you do then? What if you had to pay hundreds

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of dollars just for permission to open a gate (as is now happening throughout the West), and the idea of loading up your pack and spending a week in the high country was but a memory? This is what's at risk here.

Let's think this through a bit further than just our hunts. How about the Statue of Liberty? The proponents of this plan are even looping in the idea of no new national parks. Places like Bull Run and Manassas Battlefield could be on the chopping block if this goes through. Even Yellowstone, a place that embodies the West and the spirit of Teddy Roosevelt, could one day be owned as a private ranch for the use of the 1%.

Proponents of this plan are now back-peddling from their original sell-off language. Instead, they are pushing for the states to "take back" their lands. But these lands are federal lands, and the federal government has been around much longer than most of the states. In fact the states never owned these lands in the first place. The lands that the states do have now were granted to them at statehood for the express purpose of helping maintain state budgets through development. With most states being essentially broke, if they are given these lands they will have to sell them to balance their budgets. Another component to state ownership is that state trust lands must make money, and they do not belong to every American equally. They belong to the state and are frequently closed to public access for a variety of reasons. Many times there are exorbitant fees and pass requirements to enter state lands.

Just in case I haven't convinced you that this is a terrible idea, let's look at a few numbers from around the country. First the big picture of what's at risk. Would you be willing to lose 232, 875, 640 acres of National Forest? How

about 248 million acres of BLM lands? If those pushing this idea win, what would we do with the 19 million acres that belong to the Department Of Defense? Would the Feds keep those? Is this worth losing 80 million acres of National Parks?

Let's break it down a bit more. Region 6 of the Forest Service (Oregon and Washington) just released a long awaited study on its road system. In these two states alone, the Forest Service owns and maintains (at different levels of access) 90,000 miles of roads. Think about that for a minute—two states with 90,000 miles of roads currently being maintained with federal dollars. Just for simplicity let's say Washington has half of those. The state is now 550 million dollars in the red, and the legislature is being held in contempt of court right now for refusing to fund our schools. How is the state going to afford maintenance on 45,000 additional miles of roads? This story is similar across the West. Alaska is 62% federal land, and their budget is in the tank due to the low price of oil.

Still not convinced? Let's look at a bit of history. When states were granted land from the Federal Government at statehood, these lands were designated "trust" lands, meant to generate revenue for the purpose of financially supporting the states. After statehood, Nevada sold off 2.7 million acres of its

lands and now owns a paltry 3000 acres of its original land grants. In other words, Nevada sold 99.98% of its own lands. Idaho has sold off 30% of its lands, or 1.5 million acres. These are but two examples.

You don't have to scratch the surface very deep to find out the true story behind this attack on our heritage, and you don't have to be a genius to see that the numbers just don't add up. If these lands are transferred, they will be sold. There is no other option.

To me, the definition of freedom and liberty is being able to wander in the high country. It's about being able to feed my family on the game I take. It's about knowing that these magical and many times holy places belong equally to us all, regardless of where we live or our social status. This is the great American idea.

Defense of this idea must be paramount in our actions, because there is so much at stake. I, for one, don't want to be the last generation to see the green fire of the places we hunt die in our eyes. Do you?

Gregg Bafundo is the Washington State Field Coordinator for Trout Unlimited and the President of Traditional Bowhunters of Washington. When he's not out protecting big, wild places he can usually be found lost among them.



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On The Market



New and Improved Thunderbird High Solid Sandable Filler Sealer

What's new at Thunderbird Archery? You're probably familiar with our two-part epoxy bow finish and our polyurethane arrow finish. Both have been the standard for top, high quality finishes on the market. Were you aware we offer a High Solids Sandable Filler Sealer? Most people aren't. Which got us thinking. Maybe we need to improve it. So we did! We improved our Thunderbird high solid sandable filler sealer!

The new Thunderbird sealer dries 50% faster than the old sealer. Dries to the touch in 20 minutes. Can be sanded and recoated immediately. It is also easier to sand. Yet has all the same high quality filling those of you who love the old product rely on.

This sealer has been specially formulated for archery applications (but works great for many other applications as well). This product's high solids content gives a fast, excellent build on open or porous wood grains. It is an excellent sealer and filler for the riser section of a bow. Brush on application. Not recommended for the limb section due to lack of flexibility.

Specially formulated to work with our two-part epoxy to reduce finishing time and production time on your bows. You can move quickly right from filling to spraying epoxy on your bows immedi-

ately after the sealer is set and sanded.

Give it a try. We think you'll love it. For more info you can contact us at:

www.tbirdarchery.com 517-617-3658.



Rinehart Turns Heads With Motion-Focused Whitetail Doe Decoy

With years of experience in crafting the most lifelike, durable and realistic archery targets in the industry, Rinehart Targets® expands the scope of their brand with the introduction of the new Rinehart Doloma Doe decoy. The new Doloma Doe, like all Rinehart decoys, is hand-sculpted by world-class wildlife artists for unmatched realism.

Rinehart has built its reputation on using specialized, durable and life-like material—and the Doloma Doe is no exception. She features a patented design, ultra-quiet Rinehart foam for silent transport and an easy-carry folding configuration for nimble treks to and from any hunting location.

Aside from her stunningly realistic looks, the Doloma Doe's strongest attribute is her natural head turning—and neck turning—abilities. The capa-

bility to naturally turn her head in the slightest breeze to simulate life-like movement will draw in the wariest of bucks. With the anchor rod strategically positioned behind the front legs, breeze-activated movement allows the entire body of the decoy to pivot in addition to the motion of the head and neck. The patented Doloma Doe comes with a full-carry bag that's crafted with a "quiet-tech" fabric and features a drawstring and a shoulder strap for comfortable and stealthy transport.

From the decoy design to the carry bag, Rinehart tweaked every detail in the field to create a decoy that's designed and proven by hunters, for hunters. The key to a consistently successful decoy is realism and movement, and the Doloma Doe from Rinehart is turning heads in both these categories.

Specifications:

- Height: 29 ¼ inches.
- Length: 49 inches.
- Simulated Weight: 95 pounds.
- Actual Weight: 8 pounds.
- Tool-less Assembly and Set-up.
- Constructed of Exclusive Quiet Rinehart Foam.
- Includes Quiet Carry Bag.

For more product information and media inquiries, please contact Glenn Walker, glenn@providencemarketing-group.net.

Ameristep's New Tellus Chairs

Ameristep's new Tellus and Tellus Lite compact and portable chairs are lightweight, highly packable chairs that are ideal for not only ground blind hunting, but for any outdoor pursuit – from dove, turkey and waterfowl hunting to camping and ice fishing.

Weighing in at a mere 4.3 pounds,



the new Tellus Lite Chair has a solid 225-pound capacity, yet collapses down to an astounding 14"x4"x4" package—small enough to fit into the side pocket of many hunting packs. The included carry bag sports a carabiner to aid in securing the chair to your pack's exterior. The Tellus Lite features a super comfortable sling seat design supported by a surprisingly strong and sturdy shock-corded collapsible frame for quick setup. A built-in gear pouch is suspended beneath the front of the seat, providing secure and easily-accessible storage for game calls, snacks, drinks, smartphone or other necessities. The attractive and stealthy Tellus Lite is finished in Realtree Xtra camouflage with a natural tan seating surface.

Need more capacity? Ameristep's standard Tellus Chair shares all the same features as the Tellus Lite, but is rated with a whopping 300-pound capacity. The standard Tellus packs down to 15"x4"x4"—just one inch longer than the Tellus Lite—and weighs only five pounds.

- Compact and portable.
- Comfortable sling seat design.
- Shock-cord frame design for quick setup.
- Gear pouch holds calls, cell phone, water bottle, etc.
- Realtree Xtra Camo.

- Carry bag with carabiner for attaching to your pack.
- 300-lb. (Tellus) and 225-lb. (Tellus Lite) capacities.
- Weight: 5 lbs. (Tellus) / 4.3 lbs. (Tellus Lite).

A happy hunter is a comfortable hunter. Ameristep's radical new Tellus and Tellus Lite Chairs create both conditions by providing strong and adaptable seating that's a dream to store, carry, set up and use. Pick up a couple this season and start hunting happy.

For more information, go to www.ameristep.com. Also available from Walmart, eBay, Amazon, and Dick's Sporting Goods.



Rhino Products Dual Purpose Case

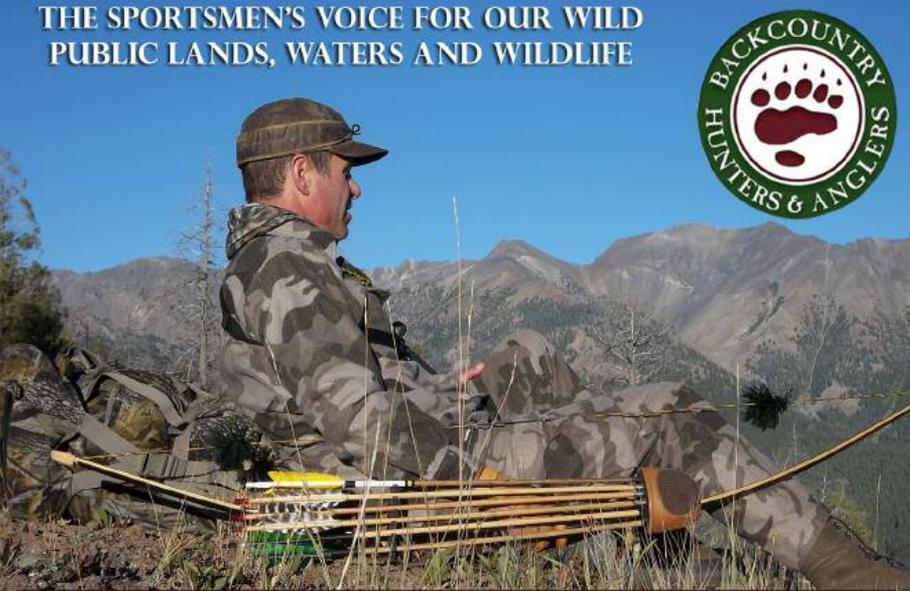
We have been manufacturing bags for medical and police use for thirty

years. Steve has always been an avid bowhunter and after much urging from him we added our archery line five years ago. We have many bags from small, to carry your tools, to larger, to carry all your gear, and several bow case designs. The one we are most proud of and are sure you will love is our new Dual Purpose Case, designed to carry a recurve, longbow or take-down. Fully padded and fleece lined to protect your strung bow with quiver attached or folded compact to carry your takedown. We also have a two-piece take-down case, three-piece take-down case, a strung bow case that fits recurve and longbow, without quiver attached, and a padded case for unstrung one piece longbow, or a one piece unstrung recurve.

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Traditional Harvests



Alan Hagedorn of Clitherall, MN, took this South Dakota whitetail with a Root recurve and cedar shaft.



This 8-point southwest Texas whitetail was harvested by Scott McClellen of Fort Worth, TX. Scott used a 60# Bob Lee recurve, Easton shaft, and 150-grain Woodsman broadhead.



Marin Flores of Stanwood, WA, with a cow elk he took with a Black Widow recurve and Magnus broadhead.



Brad Callaway of Bright, IN, used a 55# 1959 Bear Kodiak, Gold Tip shaft, and Magnus Stinger head to take this turkey.



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Bowhunting Safari Consultants client Jim Carlson from Illinois travelled to northern British Columbia for bison. He took this bull with a Schafer Silvertip longbow and a STOS broadhead.



Abraham Hall, with his grandson Lucian, took this 27# late season tom with a 53# Black Widow recurve and Rage broadhead.



Curt Lytle of Zuni, VA, drew a coveted New Mexico bull elk tag and hunted nine days until he bugled in this bull to 22 yards. Curt used a 55# Black Widow recurve, Carbon Express shaft, and VPA broadhead.

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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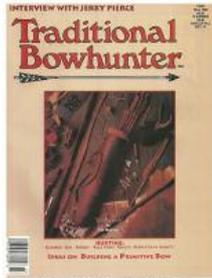
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See page four of this ad for the order form and pricing.



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13-Fall 1992



14-Winter 1992



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16-Apr/May 1993



17-Jun/Jul 1993



20-Dec/Jan 1994



23-Jun/Jul 1994



24-Aug/Sep 1994



25-Oct/Nov 1994



26-Dec/Jan 1995



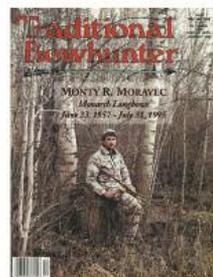
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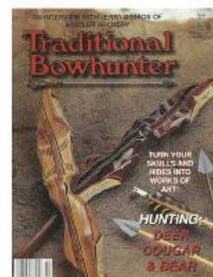
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32-Dec/Jan 1996



33-Feb/Mar 1996



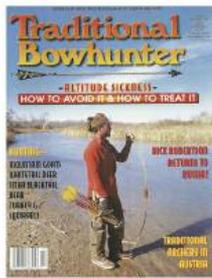
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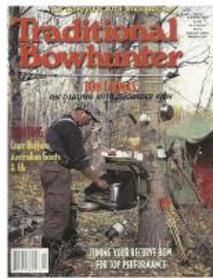
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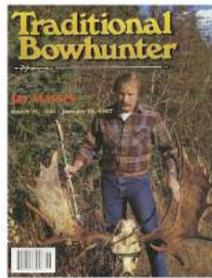
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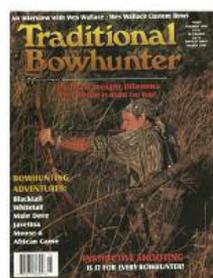
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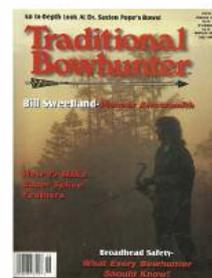
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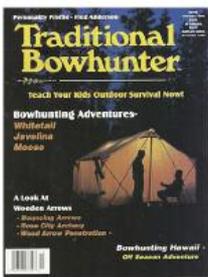
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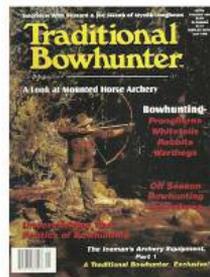
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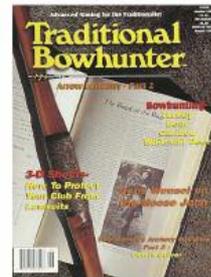
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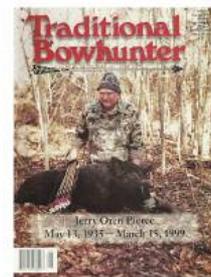
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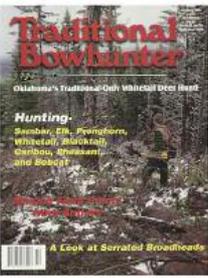
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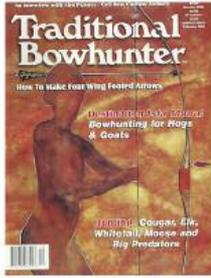
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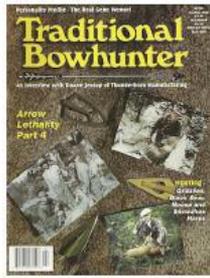
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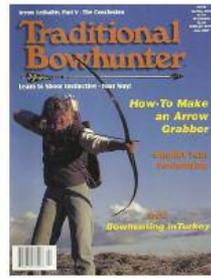
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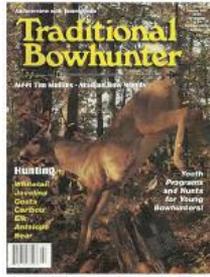
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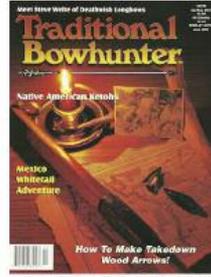
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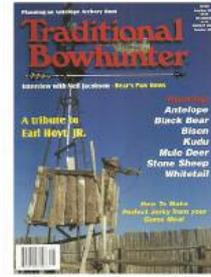
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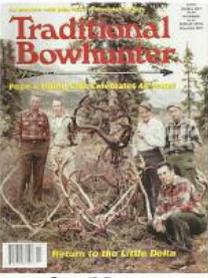
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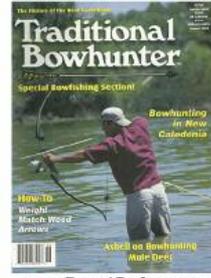
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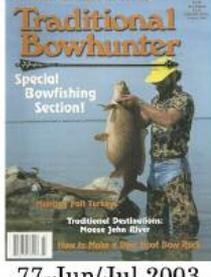
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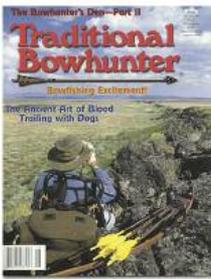
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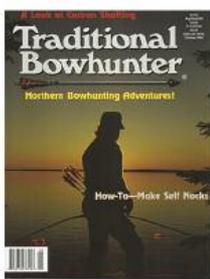
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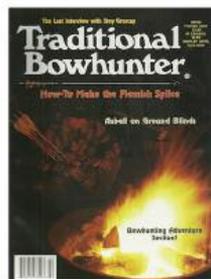
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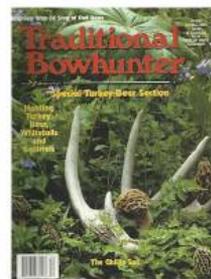
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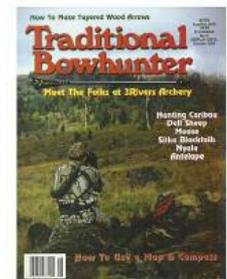
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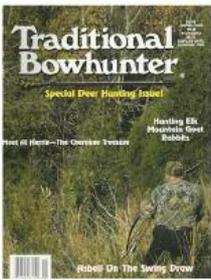
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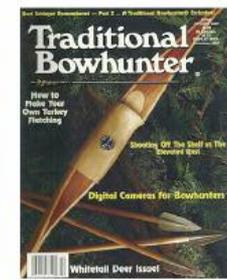
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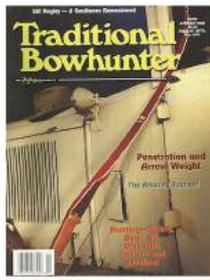
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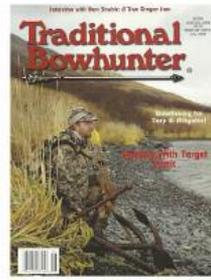
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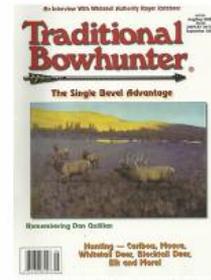
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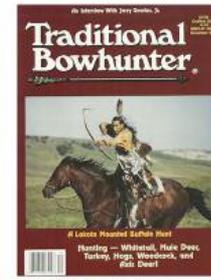
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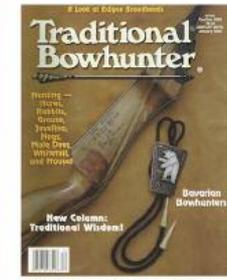
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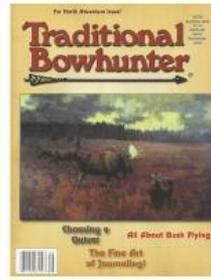
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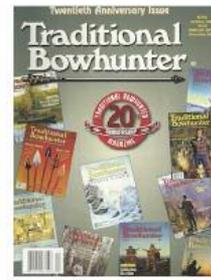
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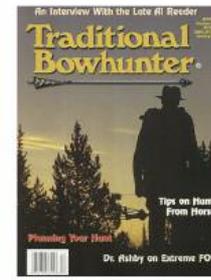
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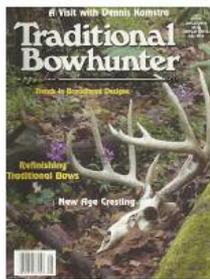
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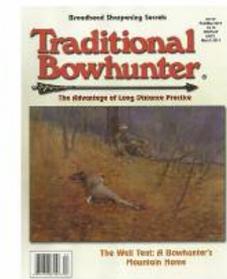
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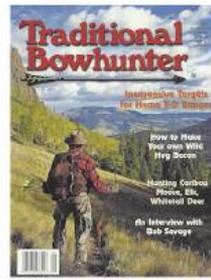
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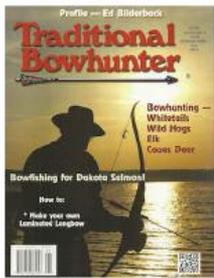
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142-Apr/May 2014



143-Jun/Jul 2014



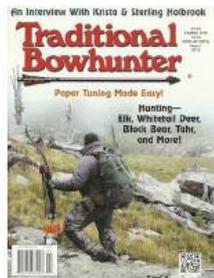
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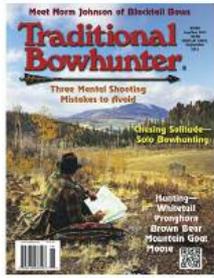
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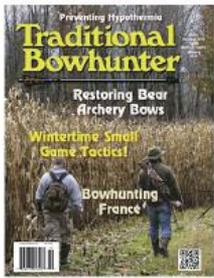
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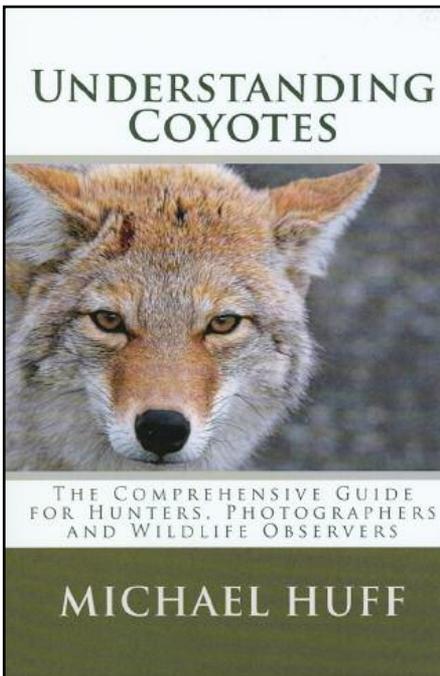
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Understanding Coyotes

Author: Michael Huff

Paperback: \$17.95

As I begin this review at 9 p.m. on a weekday evening all the domestic dogs in our little cul-de-sac simultaneously erupt in a barking cacophony. Curious, I leave the comforts of my home office and step outside into the cool winter air of the central Florida evening and immediately hear the long, drawn-out howl of *Canis latrans* coming from the cattle pasture down the street. Many theories abound regarding the eastern progression of “God’s dog,” all beyond the scope of this column, but tonight’s audible encounter reinforces that the coyotes’ coast to coast march has concluded and they’re here to stay.

While describing the effect of coyote predation on both natural and domestic prey, author Michael Huff inadvertently addresses what this reviewer calls “predator-lite.” In nature documentaries, the wild cats or canids appear to kill hoofed mammals in seconds. As efficient as are the teeth and jaws of the

world’s carnivores, prey animals don’t die without a fight. The author refers to a study which noted coyotes can take up to thirteen minutes to kill their prey. (Incidentally, African lions take the same amount of time to kill a wildebeest.) And as do other carnivores, coyotes on occasion choose to surplus kill. Anyone can commiserate with the enraged sheep farmer who finds a large percentage of his flock eviscerated and unconsumed.

If one is a “how” person seeking the best method to secure a coyote pelt *Understanding Coyotes* will certainly aid in that effort. However, this volume is really written with the “why” person in mind, which will highly appeal to the naturalist hunter. For example, it’s an established fact that hunting after dark with a red light has led to the demise of many a predator from the Americas to Africa. Yet here we learn why red lights are an effective tool. In his best biologist-speak, author Huff explains how the eye detects color wavelengths in nanometers (nm). The higher the nm the more difficult the color is to perceive: violet at 400 nm as opposed to red at 650 nm. “Since red is higher on the wavelength spectrum, coyotes are less able to detect this light color than colors lower on the spectrum.” Understanding how animals detect the color wavelength easily explains why deer and other animals fall prey to safety-orange clad outdoorsmen at orange’s 590 nm.

Concealment is the key to escaping detection from the coyote’s eyes. To avoid contrast with the background of most habitats, author Huff prefers an ASAT pattern in wooded areas, earth tones in farmlands, and white, of course, when the snow is flying. While the hunter must blend in if one chooses

to use a lifelike coyote decoy, Huff suggests said decoy’s color should greatly contrast with the surrounding area as one wants the coyote to detect it.

The author also strongly cautions against carelessness in the boot department. How many readers have seen a camo-clad hunter, boots on, fueling up his truck at the convenience store? Huff wisely suggests that hunting boots be worn only in the woods to remain as scent free as possible. And how many of us have stepped in a puddle en route to our stand? We learn here that scent molecules do in fact remain in water. Huff recommends that walking around the puddle leaves less scent. It’s tough to beat a canine nose that boasts as many as 225 million scent receptors.

Coyote predation on deer has been studied extensively across agricultural and forest lands in Georgia, Alabama, Iowa, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, and Oklahoma. The results are unanimous: coyotes are hammering what biologists label “fawn recruitment.” Song dogs kill half of all fawns in multiple study areas. However, when the tables are turned and a majority of coyotes were removed from a particular study area, fawn to doe ratios increased by an incredible 154%.

Understanding Coyotes leaves the reader wondering if we have some culpability for our contentious relationship with this species. The current, and still controversial, wolf repatriation project aside, one must consider that we removed the coyote’s only real adversary, we cleared forests which created the open spaces that coyote food such as moles and mice thrive in, and new suburban development provides coyotes with alternate and easy ways to obtain food selections: pets and garbage. Yet we should begrudgingly admire a

species that stubbornly continues to redefine resilience despite decades of traps, snares, cyanide, aerial gunning, and government hired snipers.

Author Huff knows his coyotes and how to hunt them, but he has a keen appreciation for the prankster of Indian legend:

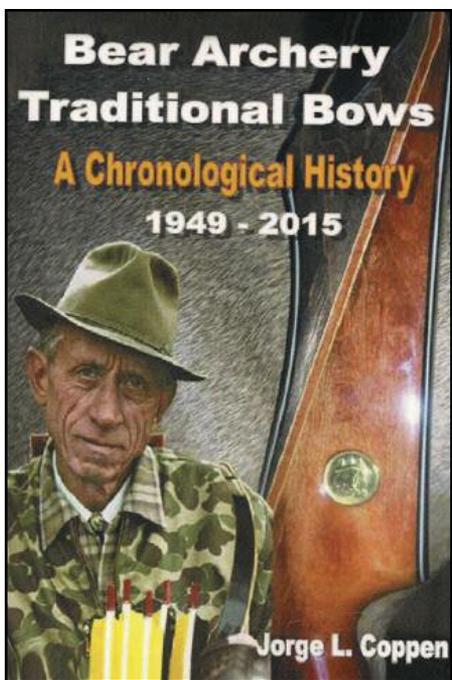
As an adult, I have spent much of my life studying and observing wild animals. During this time, I have yet to encounter an animal that rivals the coyote. There is magic in the coyote!

Contact the author at understandingcoyotes@gmail.com to purchase this volume.

bows was replaced with a bust of Fred Bear that collectors commonly referred to as the “Freddy Krueger coin.” This moniker voiced their overall distaste with a less than flattering likeness of their beloved Papa Bear that for half a decade was affixed to the most famous line of bows in archery history. Wisely, the powers that be returned the bear medallion once again. This is just one of many examples of Bear bow lore readers will absorb from *Bear Archery Traditional Bows*.

Coppen aptly details nearly seven decades of Bear recurves. Each bow receives its own chapter from the 1949

introduction of the first version of the “Grizzly” to the 2015 edition of Fred Bear’s go to bow, the “Custom Kodiak Take-down.” The author fills over 350 pages of material, which allows both those with a casual interest and serious collectors to identify accurately each bow Bear archery placed on the market, whether it is recurve, longbow, target bow, youth bow, or all-purpose bow. Each chapter concludes with a table that categorizes the bow by year, AMO length, riser wood, type of riser medallion, glass color, overlay color, and serial number prefix. Numerous photographs of each bow chronicling multi-year edi-



*Bear Archery Traditional Bows
A Chronological History
1949-2015
Author: Jorge Coppen
Paperback: \$29.95*

Aficionados of any highly collectibles typically have their own fanspeak, so why would those who amass walls of Bear bows be any different? From 1998 to 2003 the iconic “standing bear logo” medallion that was imbedded into the risers of untold numbers of recurve

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tions are included with its corresponding chapter.

The only bows not included in this well-researched volume are those that Bear produced specifically for department stores such as Sears and Roebuck and Montgomery Ward. Bowshooters of the day may recall a few of those bows by name: Stag Hunter, Hawk, Raven, and the Black Panther.

Despite the number of fine custom and production traditional bows on the market today, Bear bows are and will remain the bows that, due to the innovative design skills and marketing savvy of Fred Bear, introduced archery hunting to the outdoor community at large. This reviewer would struggle to recall any friend or acquaintance who has not owned a Bear bow at some point in their bowshooting career.

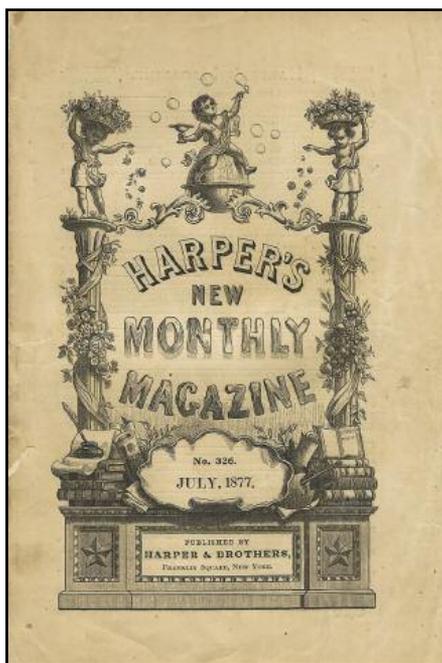
Author Jorge Coppen owes his passion for Bear bows to a chance meeting with the late Al Reader, who should be no stranger to longtime readers of TBM. Reader began amassing Bear bows as a teenager in the late 1950s:

"I've never stopped collecting [Bear bows], and it seems I learn something new about them every week. No, I am no

expert in them and may never figure it all out, but I have had my share come and go."

Author Coppen certainly carries reader's passion to a new generation of admirers and collectors of Bear bows. The depth of his knowledge cements his intent as both collector and deep admirer of his subject material.

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Hunting with the Longbow

Author: Maurice Thompson
Harper's Monthly, July 1877

Post-Civil War policy inadvertently gave birth to modern day archery in the United States. Mistrusted and weaponless at the close of the war, confederate soldiers Maurice and Will Thompson turned to the longbow for both sustenance and recreation. Their exploits in the Georgia and Florida woods and marshes can be found in Maurice's must have classic book *The Witchery of Archery*.

Thompson was the quintessential hunter-naturalist. When one removes the bowshooting aspect of his works, his

prose reads as if it were penned by John James Audubon or George Bird Grinnell. In an excerpt from the Harper's piece Thompson describes a pileated woodpecker:

When at rest, his body appears quite black, while his head has white stripes about the eyes, and is surmounted by a long tuft of feathers. When he takes flight, which he does with great vigor at the least alarm, his wings show a sprinkling of white, which relieves the dusky hue of his body.

Market hunting at the time had already had its way with whitetail deer so remarkably, in contrast to today's acceptable standard, that songbirds and the like received the greatest attention from the Thompson brothers' arrows. Mind you that flinging arrows at non-game birds had yet to be banned by the 1918 Migratory Bird Treaty Act. In this seventeen page article Thompson does pay his respects to species still commonly chased today with stick and string: squirrel, rabbit, and wild turkey.

The Thompson brothers of course fabricated their own archery tackle and at times loosed up to ten arrows at their intended targets at distances nearly unthinkable by today's traditionalists. However, as with any historic writings on the sport, they must be judged in the context of their times. The Thompsons' role in the birth and acceptance of modern archery ranks alongside Pope, Young, Compton, Bear, and Hill.

This reviewer wishes to thank Ray Tareila, Bear bow historian and contributor to the Jorge Coppen volume, for sharing this 139-year-old piece of archery history. Ray can be contacted at straytarrow@comcast.net

Our regular book reviewer, Dave Tetzlaff lives in Sorrento, Florida.



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For clarification's sake, I'd like to talk about what stalking is versus still-hunting. Sometimes hunters will refer to stand hunting as still-hunting, as I will on occasion. But when I say still-hunting, I'll be referring to moving very slowly and deliberately through the woods, trying to spot animals before they spot you. Stalking, on the other hand, is often what still-hunting leads to. This is the active, and sometimes passive, approach to an animal once you've got them spotted.

Both stalking and still-hunting require extreme concentration, stealth, and alertness. When you're stalking an animal, you have something to focus on—something that demands attention—but still-hunting requires the same concentration without any immediately tangible object of attention. We don't know where, when, or even if we'll find what we're looking for. Maintaining concentration when there is nothing in particular to concentrate on is the most difficult aspect of still-hunting.

Still-hunting is a mental game. It's really more about an approach to hunting than any specific techniques or strategies. I don't think any other type of hunting requires the type of sustained attentiveness that still-hunting does.

We all have a number of things that occupy our minds every day, events going on at work and home that we constantly find ourselves thinking about. In order to maintain the level of concentration you need for effective still-hunting, we have to let go of these distractions and become immersed in the moment. We have to be here now, completely. It helps me to go out into the woods and sit on a log, or lie on the ground and do a little meditation. Concentrate on your breathing and imagine all that mental



Stalking and Still-Hunting

The nearly lost art of getting close.

clutter flowing out of your body and into the ground with every exhalation. Call me crazy, but it works.

When we set out to still-hunt an area, we never know what might happen or when an animal might show up. It could happen a minute or four hours from now. That's why it's so important to stay alert and on the lookout. I can't count the times I've started the day off hunting hard, really paying attention to what's around me, being careful and quiet, only to spook something when my mind starts to wander. When I spook game, that's usually why. My mind starts to wander, and when that happens, I'll start making more noise, being a little less careful, and moving a little faster than I should be.

To be honest, I can't maintain that level of alertness for more than about an hour at a time. When you've done

everything right and hunted hard for an hour or more, and then let your guard down for a minute and spook an animal, it's a little depressing. When I catch my attention waning, I'll stop and sit for a while. That usually does the trick.

Because I can't stay on high alert for hours on end, still-hunting becomes about knowing when to slow down and take notice of all the little things. A lot of the time success depends upon gut feelings—when you're moving through the woods and come to a place where, even though there are no physical indicators you're conscious of to indicate their presence, you know there are animals around. You can feel it. Hunters get these feelings all the time. I think we're picking up on subconscious memories sparked by our surroundings of places we've found animals before.

When you get those feelings, you feel recharged and can spend another hour inching through a patch of woods. Sometimes you find what you're looking for, sometimes not. Even though you might not find the animal, that doesn't mean it wasn't there. Being able to gauge the freshness of sign will be a big help in knowing when to really start paying attention. When you come across goeey elk droppings, you know they've been there recently and are probably not far. A lot of the time you can smell elk as well.

Being able to still-hunt effectively depends on your ability to remain undetected, which is affected by a number of factors including terrain and vegetation. I do a lot of hunting on fairly narrow ridges where, by moving to one side or the other, I can use that topographic break to mask both sound and sight. The density and type of vegetation can also play a big role. There are tipping points beyond which good cover becomes too much or too little. Too much cover can be hard to move through quietly and, if you're shooting a longbow, impossible to shoot in. You'll

often find lots of animals in those places, but they'll usually be bedded and much more likely to see or hear you first. With too little cover, you're just plain exposed.

I never still-hunt bedding areas when I don't already know exactly where an animal is bedded. The odds are just not very good. Stalking a bedded animal, on the other hand, can be very productive given the right conditions. I do most of my still-hunting in early morning and late afternoon when animals are most active, or during the rut or other times animals are active throughout the day. Basically, I'm just mirroring the animals' activity pattern. If they're bedded down and you don't know exactly where, you'll just end up spooking game. It's better to take a nap and wait for them to start moving again.

If you spend enough time around animals, you'll eventually understand what they're saying through body language. Are they alert, relaxed, or watching another animal? Ear and head position are a good indicator of mood, but there are others as well. Feeding, ruminating, and flicking flies are all signs of

relaxed animals. You can sometimes calm lightly spooked animals with calls of other animals. When I'm hunting whitetails, I'll usually have a turkey call in my mouth. I've had several experiences when I've spooked deer through noise and totally calmed them down with a few yelps. You could probably do the same with elk, although I haven't tested the theory. (*Editors' note: See Marv Clyncke's piece on this subject in the last issue of the magazine.*)

The way you move can be important as well. Have you ever tried to ride a bike as slowly as you can? You constantly have to make corrections, and you're all over the place because you don't have that forward momentum to keep you upright. Walking extremely slowly is much the same, especially on uneven ground. The way that we walk isn't really conducive to slow movement; it's designed to cover ground. When we walk, we're constantly falling forward and catching ourselves with that next step. This is a problem when still-hunting for a couple of reasons. First, it's hard to maintain balance, so you end up flailing around trying to stay centered. Second, if we're relying on that next step to catch us, we can't stop until we make that step. When still-hunting, we need to be able to stop instantly and completely.

To be able to do this, we need to shift our balance point to the foot that's planted firmly on the ground. I keep my weight on the back foot, scan the ground with my peripheral vision, place the toe of the front foot, transfer weight, and make the step. This way, you're always centered and can stop instantly at any time, so long as your weight is centered over the firmly planted foot. By placing the toe first, you can more easily feel for obstructions and lift the foot if you encounter one.

I've made it a habit to move as little

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as possible while I'm still-hunting. If you need to look, look with your eyes first, and then turn your head if needed. If you need to point to something, do it with a nod, not by throwing your hands up and flailing around.

When an animal does finally appear you've got to decide what to do. It's usually best to do nothing, at least until you watch it for a little while to see what it's up to. If an animal hasn't detected you, it's probably not in a hurry, and you shouldn't be either. If it is in a hurry, there's probably nothing you're going to be able to do about it anyway.

What you do will depend on the conditions. If you've got favorable conditions—good cover, damp footing, a little breeze—it's not too difficult to get within forty or fifty yards of deer and elk. After that, the difficulty of active stalking increases exponentially. I'll usually watch the animals for a time, figure out what they're doing and where they're likely to head, and then try to get in front of them. With deer and elk, you don't usually recover from a mistake within that 50-yard mark. If you snap a twig, you might not totally spook the animal, but they'll remember that spot and constantly check on it.

You'll need to pay attention to the clothes that you've got on. Some materials are much quieter than others. I've found wool to be about as good as it gets, and I've yet to find any rain gear that is totally quiet. Back when I lived and hunted in the south, I was a big fan of the L.L. Bean & LaCrosse rubber bottom boots with leather tops. They've got thin soles, so you can feel what's under your feet. But if you're going to be spending any time on a slope, especially on pine duff, they quickly turn into skis. You'll spend more time on your butt than upright. I've had to move to a boot with a much more aggressive tread and

a heel that isn't the greatest for sneaking around because you can't feel what's underfoot. If you're careful though, you can still be very quiet, even with heavy boots. Still, during a final stalk, I'll often take them off and just wear my wool socks.

Stalking and still-hunting are skills that were once very prevalent in hunting. But, like so many other woodsmanship skills, they're quickly being lost, rendered unnecessary by modern aids and techniques that don't require years to master. But if there's a crowd that can appreciate the hard work and years of dedication required to master a difficult skill, it's the one reading this magazine. If you've never tried it before, prepare to be frustrated. But, like shooting the stick bows we so love, when things finally do come together

the rewards are so worth it. Now get out there and get your stalk on!

Clay Hayes produces videos on all manner of woodsmanship, traditional archery, and bowhunting topics. You can check them out at www.twistedstave.com.



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Tips From the Old Timer

By Dennis Kamstra

I was paging through the 1969 edition of Doug Kittridge's *Archer's Bible* and it struck me that a common accessory in those days was the Brush Button. This handy rubber device was laced onto the bow string to prevent grass and limbs from being wedged between string and limb of a recurve bow. I don't see many of these in use these days. If you are hunting with a recurve, add this to your tackle as it will relieve a lot of frustration while in the field. It was amazing to find so many items in the *Archer's Bible* that are applicable to traditional archers today. Pretty hard to reinvent the wheel.

* * *

If you are making your own wood arrows, pay particular attention to the nock end taper. When using a blade cutting taper tool (similar to a pencil sharpener), it is very easy to make a misaligned taper, which will cause big problems with arrow flight. This little detail is something that requires extra care. When completed, the base of the taper should be equidistant from the tip of the taper. This is why I prefer to use a grinding wheel with a jig set at the proper degree. If you are using hardwood shafts, this is even more critical since the blade cutters tend to chip away portions of the wood, which weakens this important contact of string to arrow. When you have seated your nock, roll the shaft on a flat surface and check for any wobbling of the nock. If it does wobble, cut the shaft at the base of the nock taper and start over as this arrow will never fly to its potential. All of this is also critical with the broadhead taper too, especially if you are using long or wide broadheads, as any misalignment will disrupt the arrow flight. In my

opinion, these two tapers are the most critical parts of arrow construction. Archers who are going from carbon or aluminum shafts back to wooden shafts often forget this detail because they have been used to using machined inserts. If you are thinking about switching to wooden shafts, be aware that your choices of woods are now much more varied, thanks to people like Kevin Forrester (www.forresterwoodshafts.com). He offers a lot of choices. If you want a heavy hunting shaft (650+ gr.) in 5/16, spined for a 50 lb. bow, he can supply it. I'm now shooting mahogany shafts. They are very impressive, but I still love that smell of Port Orford cedar!

* * *

When carrying water in the field, you do not want the noise of liquid sloshing in a canteen. Better to carry a plastic lined leather bota bottle—and not only for drinking water. If you find yourself in close quarters with suspicious animals, squirt water from your bota directly onto the ground, making a splashing noise. This sound imitates a urinating animal, which is a natural sound in the woods. Often, animals will relax at this sound. This trick is especially useful when elk hunting as they tend to travel in herds and urination sounds are common. During the rut, cow moose will urinate in water to attract bulls. If you are fortunate enough to harvest an elk or any large game you intend to hunt in the future, do not pass up the opportunity to collect all the urine from the bladder. Funnel it into a bota and use it in the same manner. This adds scent to the sound, which is doubly effective. Just be certain you label your bota bottle with the contents, as consumption is not recommended!



* * *

If you are dry camping and need a water storage container, place a condom inside a sock and fill it at the nearest stream. Just be sure your wife is aware of the intended use!

* * *

If you are getting up in years like me and have amassed a bow collection, you should give some thought to what you want done with the collection when you go to the Happy Hunting Grounds. If you have rare bows like English longbows or older bows made by noted bowyers, it might be a good idea to get them appraised. Finding someone with the proper knowledge to appraise bows can be difficult, but by using Google search engine you would be amazed at the expertise out there. Once you have a proper appraisal, your beneficiaries can better deal with how to handle your collection. If they decide to donate the collection, they can use the appraised value as a tax deduction. At the very least, you should place detailed instructions in your will (if you don't have one, make one!). If you want a specific bow to go to someone special in your life, put it in writing or chances are that your coveted gear will end up in a garage sale, going to someone who does not appreciate those bows as true treasures.

Try to remember when you first started archery. If someone had given

you one of their prize bows, would it not have changed your life? Simply handing your archery gear to your kids or grandkids might be misguided if they do not have the love of the sport. Better to give them to someone who would really appreciate them.

I find myself dealing with this same issue regarding my taxidermy collection. Believe it or not, everyone does not share our love for our mounts, which are simply dead animal heads to some people. I decided to display them at a sporting goods store so others can appreciate them. Just be certain they are appraised, insured, and carry specific instructions in your will.

* * *

My life has always been blessed with dogs. During my childhood, they were simply pets and I really did not appreciate them until they were gone (then it was devastating). Later, I used them for hunting birds. Subsequently, I ran hounds for big game. Now I find myself reverting to dogs for pets, making a complete circle. Certainly, I am no Dog Whisperer, but I have learned a few things about dogs that I would like to pass along:

If you are choosing a pup for hunting, it might be best to leave the family at home. You do not want emotion involved in this important choice. I have had my best luck with females (dogs that is!). Choose the pup at eight weeks of age and try to be there when the whole litter is together. Be the first to choose if possible. Look for the roughneck, loud, bossy bitch that walks with a swagger and snaps at her littermates—basically the “bully” of the litter. If you are lucky, this one will not have been chosen by the breeder before you get there.

Purebreds are not always the best selection, in my opinion. For me, they often seem to be a bit knot-headed and

more prone to ill health. However, try to know the father and mother and observe them both.

The first few nights with a pup in the house can be sleepless. Try placing an old fashioned, wind up, alarm clock next to them. The loud ticking will calm them.

If you need to discipline a pup, do it with a folded newspaper. The loud noise of the paper on their butt does much more than the contact. In fact, praise and reward generally work much better than discipline. However, some pups are just stubborn and need to know who is the boss.

When training a pup do not use more than one command at a time. Be sure the dog understands that command before moving on to more. Also, do not use confusing terms like *whoa* and *no*, *here* and *heel*. Better to use *stop* and *come*. Your tone of voice will also make a big difference. They will know if you are mad at them or praising them.

If you will be training your pup to be a hunting dog, you will have to introduce them to the sound of a gun. This can ruin a dog for life if not done correctly. Start by making loud noises when they are feeding (rattle a pan or slam a door). Do not make the mistake of reassuring them if they jump at the noise. Instead, simply ignore them until nothing happens when noises occur. Then move to a cap gun during feeding. Then you can proceed to a .22. When the pup begins to show interest instead of fright, you are on the correct path.

If you have problems with male dogs urinating on your shrubbery, try placing mothballs around the vegetation. This will repel vermin as well as the dog.

Toenails can be a big issue with dogs. If they get too long they could spilt, causing a lot of pain. Cutting them can be painful as well. Try placing a slab of

concrete at the kennel gate so they have to scrape across it daily.

When working a dog on a long lead, use plastic clothesline as it will not knot or gather weed seeds and will easily slip through the grass. Use the long lead to train the pup not to venture out too far. Use a whistle to associate with the *come* command.

* * *

Getting your rig stuck in the mud is never fun, but it can be especially difficult to get out if you are by yourself and have no winch. The one thing you should invest in is a high lift jack. You will play hell getting a little bottle jack under the axle when it's submerged in mud. Jack up the stuck wheel and place flat rocks under it. Let the jack down and move to the dry wheel. Once it is jacked high off the ground, simply push the vehicle forward (or backward) until it falls off the jack. This will gain you about twelve inches and might just do the trick. If not, keep repeating until you are on dry ground. Remember to be very careful when working around a high lift jack!

Dennis is a licensed professional hunter, now living in South Africa, where he conducts hunting and photographic safaris.

His e-mail: safariden@aol.com.



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Recovery Patience

I was hunting one morning with a friend we'll call Steve, when I received a text message from him that he'd just shot a doe. Steve felt that it was a good hit, but his responses to my follow-up questions indicated otherwise. Apparently, the deer hunched up and trotted a few yards after being shot. A few seconds later, she walked another ten yards and stopped a second time. Finally she walked away through the thick underbrush. Most of you reading this already know where the deer was hit.

I'll back up a bit and fill in some additional information. Steve had only been bowhunting a few years and had a stellar record on whitetails—three for three with double lung pass-throughs. He'd never dealt with a marginal hit and, like a lot of us when we were new to bowhunting, he was ready to start

tracking immediately.

It was all I could do to convince him to stay in his tree stand until I arrived. Knowing the deer headed north, I decided I could sneak in from the south and examine his arrow, which was stuck in the field twenty yards to the west. I took one look at the green coating on the arrow and didn't say a word. I just put my index finger up to my closed lips, pointed to my abdomen, and motioned that we needed to slip out of the area.

The deer was shot at 7:12 am. It would be eight hours before we could take up the trail, and Steve was a nervous wreck. I wasn't much calmer, but I learned the hard way many years ago to give a marginally hit animal plenty of time to die. Steve begrudgingly agreed to follow me back to camp until three o'clock, at which time we'd take up the trail.

As bowhunters, patience is our best friend. We fully expect to sit for hours in a tree stand or along the edge of a meadow searching for our quarry. But for some reason, once our arrow draws blood we want to give chase immediately. I have asked a number of people who help hunters recover wounded game with blood trailing dogs about their experiences. Without exception, they all stated that the overwhelming majority of their calls come after someone took up a blood trail too soon and jumped their animal.

This may seem like a rookie mistake, but experienced hunters make it too. The last deer I lost was fifteen years ago due to the same lapse in judgement. After what I suspected was a liver shot on a whitetail buck, I had given him what I thought was enough time. Two hours later I jumped him from his bed. In my mind's eye I can still see his right

profile as he bounded across a two track sixty yards through the woods, heading for the chisel plowed cornfield where I eventually lost all sign. That episode still bothers me, and I wanted to make sure Steve's encounter ended on a better note.

I had a pretty good idea where Steve's doe headed. The trail on which he last saw her works its way down to a small, marshy flat caused by the spring fed creek that bisects our land. So when the hands on the clock said it was time, Steve and I stalked our way back to his tree stand and took up the trail.

The deer left more than adequate sign, so every few steps we stopped to glass for several minutes. If the doe was still alive I wanted to see her before she saw us, so we could back out and return later. Eighty yards into our recovery, we came to a point where the trail starts to turn east and head for the creek. After a minute or two of glassing I spotted a glint of white next to a young cedar tree forty yards away through the underbrush. Sure enough, it was his doe, very much expired. I'm not sure who was happier, Steve because he now had fresh venison for the freezer, or me for knowing that he wouldn't have to carry forever the guilt of losing this deer.

Too often, outdoor writers only tell of perfect hits with fast recoveries. The alternative is rarely discussed, and the topic of lost animals is nearly taboo. This isn't a new unwritten rule, as anyone who's read old bowhunting magazines and books can attest. But perhaps we're not doing anyone any favors by not sharing a more diverse array of experiences to show that patience after the shot is more important than patience before it.



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