

# Bow Hunter MISSISSIPPI

The Official Publication of the Mississippi Bowhunters Association

Volume 1 Winter 2017

*inside this issue...*

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# | MISSISSIPPI BOWHUNTER |

Volume 1 | Winter 2017 | Published by the Mississippi Bowhunters Association

P O Box 773 | Starkville, MS 39760 | [www.mississippibowhunters.com](http://www.mississippibowhunters.com)

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<b>On Point <i>with MBA President Brian Montgomery</i></b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b>Deer Hunting Public Land in MS</b> .....	<b>6</b>
<b>The Faithful Hunting Grounds</b> .....	<b>14</b>
<b>Morgan's Passion</b> .....	<b>18</b>
<b>The River Buck</b> .....	<b>20</b>
<b>Home Boys</b> .....	<b>22</b>
<b>Statewide Whitetail Rut Dates</b> .....	<b>27</b>
<b>Target Archery</b> .....	<b>30</b>
<b>A Buck for Caralyne</b> .....	<b>32</b>
<b>The Aspirin Buster's Protégés</b> .....	<b>36</b>
<b>Public Land Offerings</b> .....	<b>38</b>
<b>The Measure of a Memory</b> .....	<b>42</b>
<b>A Season of Change</b> .....	<b>46</b>
<b>Hunt - Harvest - Help</b> .....	<b>50</b>
<b>Field to Fork</b> .....	<b>53</b>
<b>Target Panic</b> .....	<b>54</b>
<b>Jackpot!</b> .....	<b>58</b>
<b>MBA Banquet</b> .....	<b>62</b>
<b>Membership Form</b> .....	<b>64</b>

*Cover photo by Courtney Montgomery*

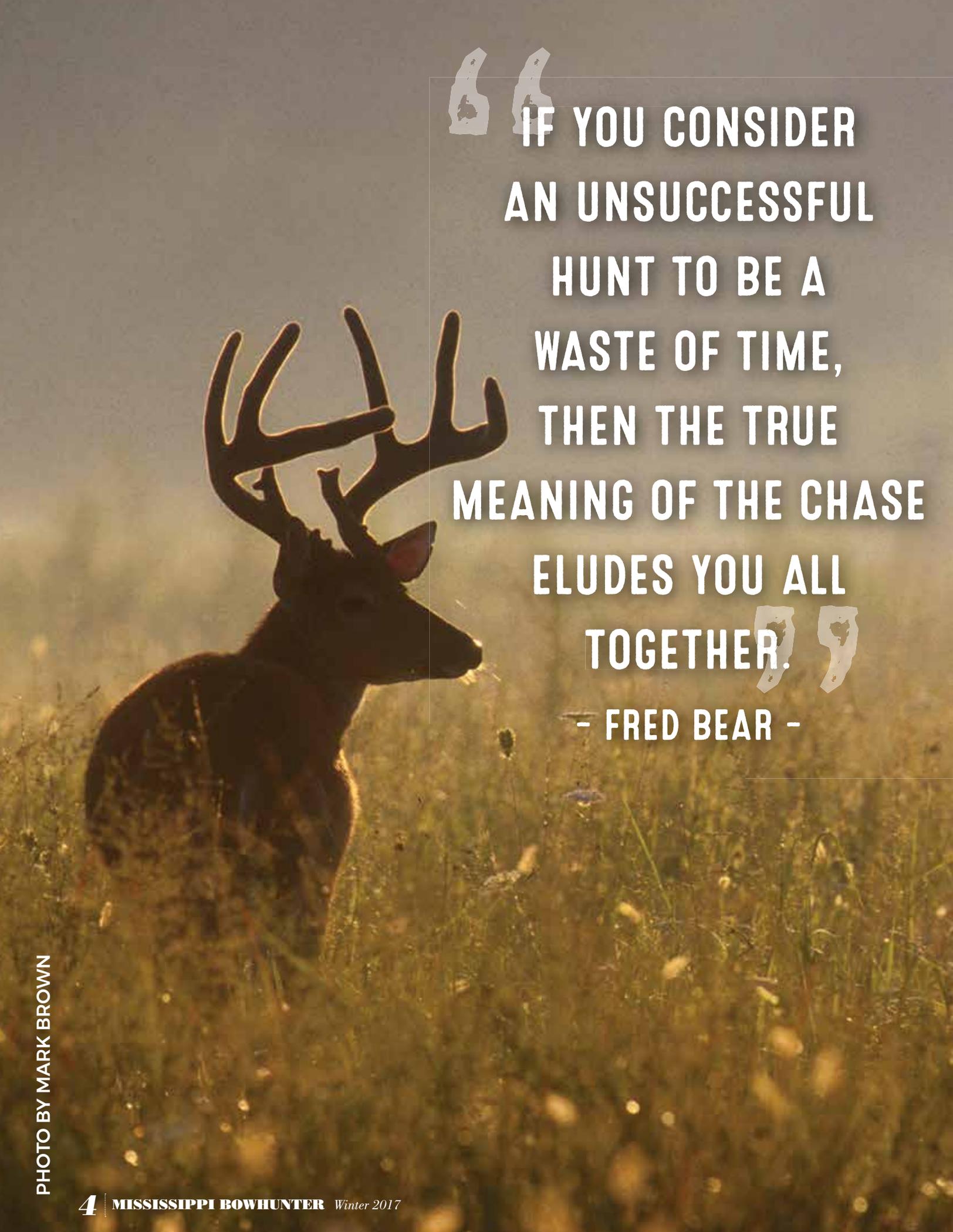
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The editorials and commentaries in this publication do not necessarily reflect the mission or position of the Mississippi Bowhunters Association.

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HUNT TO BE A  
WASTE OF TIME,  
THEN THE TRUE  
MEANING OF THE CHASE  
ELUDES YOU ALL  
TOGETHER. ”

- FRED BEAR -

**W**hy do you hunt? Sounds like a simple question and deserves a simple answer.

The question is really intended to spur a deeper question of the psychology of hunters. The answer has evolved over generations of mankind beginning with the satisfaction of our most basic needs, to survive. Most of us today don't need to hunt in order to prevent starvation and provide basic needs like clothing, at least the readers of the MBA aren't. Most of us would answer that question with responses like enjoy the outdoors, fellowship with friends and family, or it's an outdoor lifestyle. After and during my Alaskan Yukon Moose Hunt I asked myself that many times, "Why am I here?" I was there to enjoy the journey, see the scenery, experience the unique wilderness of Alaska, but mostly, to kill a giant Yukon Bull Moose with my bow.

That's what I told my guide on day 13, last day of moose season, at 4:30 when we had that bull at 125 yards and he offered me his rifle. I'm here to kill that moose with my bow, I told myself and him. I didn't come back to Mississippi with my trophy, but I didn't fail. I love the hunt and every aspect of it, but that doesn't mean I don't put in 110% to harvest the animal. But notice I didn't say, "put in 110% to be successful". Success and failure are terms we use flippantly these days to describe a hunt if we kill or don't kill and the successful ones are followed quickly by social media blasts to thousands to demonstrate that success. Are we losing the love of the hunt? Are we gravitating to loving the attention after the kill? WE all love to share our photos with friends and family and rightfully so, it's the culmination of all the hard work, determination, preparation, and patience. The point, don't lose sight of how important the road to that place is and enjoy it, and don't be so disappointed when that

# ON POINT

*with MBA President, Brian Montgomery*



road doesn't lead to an animal on the ground. The reason we hunt is the emotional experience we have when an animal steps out the we are about to harvest. That excitement, adrenalin,

uncontrollable shaking, world spinning experience is why WE do it. So, ask yourself why, and enjoy this undeniable gift we as archers are given.

# DEER HUNTING PUBLIC LAND IN MISSISSIPPI

BY GREG VIRDEN

**G**eorge Santayana's popular aphorism "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it," apparently is preached much more than practiced, especially amongst deer hunters. Along that thought, an article on deer hunting on public land in Mississippi is an oxymoron of sorts, to those in the know. Although the intention is good, the results are predictable and usually less than favorable to the wildlife and hunter alike. Please bear (no pun intended) with me a moment, pour yourself a cup of coffee, or a tumbler of bourbon, whichever you may prefer,

and allow me to elaborate. The first lesson: Be careful of what you say and whom you tell.

By the time Theodore Roosevelt made it to Onward, Mississippi, on his first—and now famous—bear hunt in 1902, the Mississippi wilderness was already well down a path from which it would never recover, taking with it certain species that are now forever gone. Roosevelt wrote a stellar account of his of his second bear hunt in 1907, entitled *In The Louisiana Canebrakes*, taking place just across the river in Tallulah, Louisiana.

From a hunter's perspective, *In The*



*Louisiana Canebrakes* reads like a fabled magical place where panthers leap on the backs of deer, wolves kill bear hounds, and great ivory-billed woodpeckers squawk from towering cypress breaks... just to whet your appetite. Not to mention the recount of the 640 lb. bruin that took the life of a bear hunter at Lake George. Roosevelt did manage to get his bear, even though market hunting and poaching was already taking its toll on the population.

They had killed many deer and wild-cat [bobcats], and now and then a panther; but their favorite game was the

black bear, which, until within a very few years, was extraordinarily plentiful in the swamps and canebrakes on both sides of the lower Mississippi, and which is still found here and there, although in greatly diminished numbers.

Outdoor journals and journalists proliferated around the turn of the century, having a similar affect as the present-day social media craze to which sportsmen have acquired an insatiable appetite. It's coined internet scouting — particularly in the Delta — which, if anything, has only compounded the “gold

Photo by Michael A. Kelly

rush” issue with hunting exponentially. Below, in an exceptional and well-documented book, *The Bear Hunter*, James T. McCafferty explains this phenomenon.

As surely as the discovery of precious metal in the Klondike would launch the Yukon Gold Rush in 1897, Hough’s Forest and Stream coverage of his bear hunts with Bobo would precipitate something of a Mississippi Delta bear rush in 1895. [...] Then, Hough said the game was done for. He had seen it before.

Bobo was deluged with letters from would-be bear hunters from all over the U.S. and almost every county in Europe, after Hough’s articles appeared.

Many Mississippi counties at that time, in fact, prohibited non-residents from hunting except on the invitation of a landowner.

Nevertheless, trespassing non-resident hunters showed up in Coahoma County in droves after Hough’s piece went to press. In making a pre-hunting trip scout of the Sunflower country he had hunted with Hough the preceding fall, Bobo found more than 100 non-Mississippi hunters camped in the woods. [...] Also, as Bobo had feared, they had driven the bears almost completely out of the vicinity. In a part of the Delta once teeming with the big predators. Bobo found neither bear or bear sign.

Without laws to protect wildlife and to regulate market and unethical hunters, combined with the unprecedented land clearing, the situation was going from bad to

catastrophic. In 1928, biologist Aldo Leopold, considered the father of conservation in the United States, made a tour of Mississippi and estimated that there were only 1,200 deer left in the entire state. Francis ‘Fanny’ Cook led a statewide grass roots effort during this time, which would be the start of the Game and Fish Commission. The Commission was established by the legislature in 1932, and Ms. Cook subsequently wrote the state’s first game laws.

Within a few decades, the deer herd had made a substantial recovery. Over this period, Mississippi had accumulated a total of six national forests comprising over one million acres. Additionally, beginning in the 1930s, a network of national wildlife refuges and state wildlife management areas were ever-expanding. Corp of Engineers land was added to the mix to eventually sum total another million acres. That’s over 1,050 square miles of public deer hunting opportunity in Mississippi!

**NOTE:** Dr. Sam Polles, in the October Mississippi Department of Wildlife Fisheries and Parks (MDWFP) commission minutes, “discussed a large acquisition of lands in the Delta that Anderson-Tully was looking to sell.” The MDWFP is also looking at Halpino and other properties across the state. Get on the phone with your MDWFP commissioner and state legislators! Do your part to make this happen!

By the 1970s, deer herds had begun to exceed carrying capacity in many areas. The buck-to-doe ratio and the herd age structure were a mess. Doe harvest was prohibited. Over seventy-five percent of the buck harvest was comprised of 1.5 year olds or less. Deer hunters were not happy. This is when

I made my debut into Mississippi’s deer hunter culture. What follows is a short personal account of a typical first day of gun season back then.

*Aaah-oooooh...aaah-oooooooooooooh.*  
The hounds had been let out! And they were moving quickly, headed our way, sounding a chorus that only a pack of Walkers can make hot on the trail. We had climbed up a couple of dozen recycled two-by-fours nailed into an old crooked tree that led up to a small wooden platform built into the first tree fork. It was a tight fit for two, tricky to get into, and listed heavily to one side, but it gave a commanding view of the massive virgin oak forest surrounding us. They called this place the government woods; it was eerily vast and seemingly endless. I called it the big woods, and they were huge. Vines as big as a man’s thigh dangled from the canopy. Little did I know at the time, but I was only a stone’s throw away from where Holt Collier had tied up a bear for Theodore Roosevelt to shoot some seventy years earlier near the Little Sunflower River.

I was a little fellow — probably easily could have passed as Alfalfa’s twin — wearing my Sears and Roebuck green steel shank rubber boots, the ones with the bright yellow soles and matching yellow laces. My corduroy coat came from the original Stein-Mart, back when they only sold name brands with minor defects at unheard of prices. Fancy camouflage didn’t exist back then. My birthday present that year was an L.C. Smith double-barrel 20 gauge, which I had in hand, loaded with a pair of slugs. I was well on my way to becoming the next Great Hunter.

That first doe was the lead deer of a herd numbering about twenty to thirty that were running around everywhere, with the hounds in close pursuit. All I needed was to find a buck

with a minimum of 4" spikes; that was the law, no does. All I could see were slickheads, best I could tell, and that was no easy feat. The herd came under and around our tree and went. I was heartbroken, but as I started to tear up, my father said, "BUCK!" There he was, a fork horn, maybe a basket six, well beyond my personal expectations and a dream come true. He was slipping around behind us on the edge of a cane brake, cleverly throwing the dogs off his scent and on the does trail.

Well, I didn't get my buck, but I did get buck fever, both kinds. Shortly thereafter, the Mississippi Bowhunters Association (MBA) successfully convinced the state legislature to extend archery season. I immediately got myself a Ben Pearson recurve (compounds hadn't been invented yet), and started putting the laydown on some does. Does were legal with a bow, and bucks were almost

impossible to kill back then, rifle or bow. If someone got lucky and brought a basket eight back to camp, well, he was viewed as a "shaw nuff goodern."

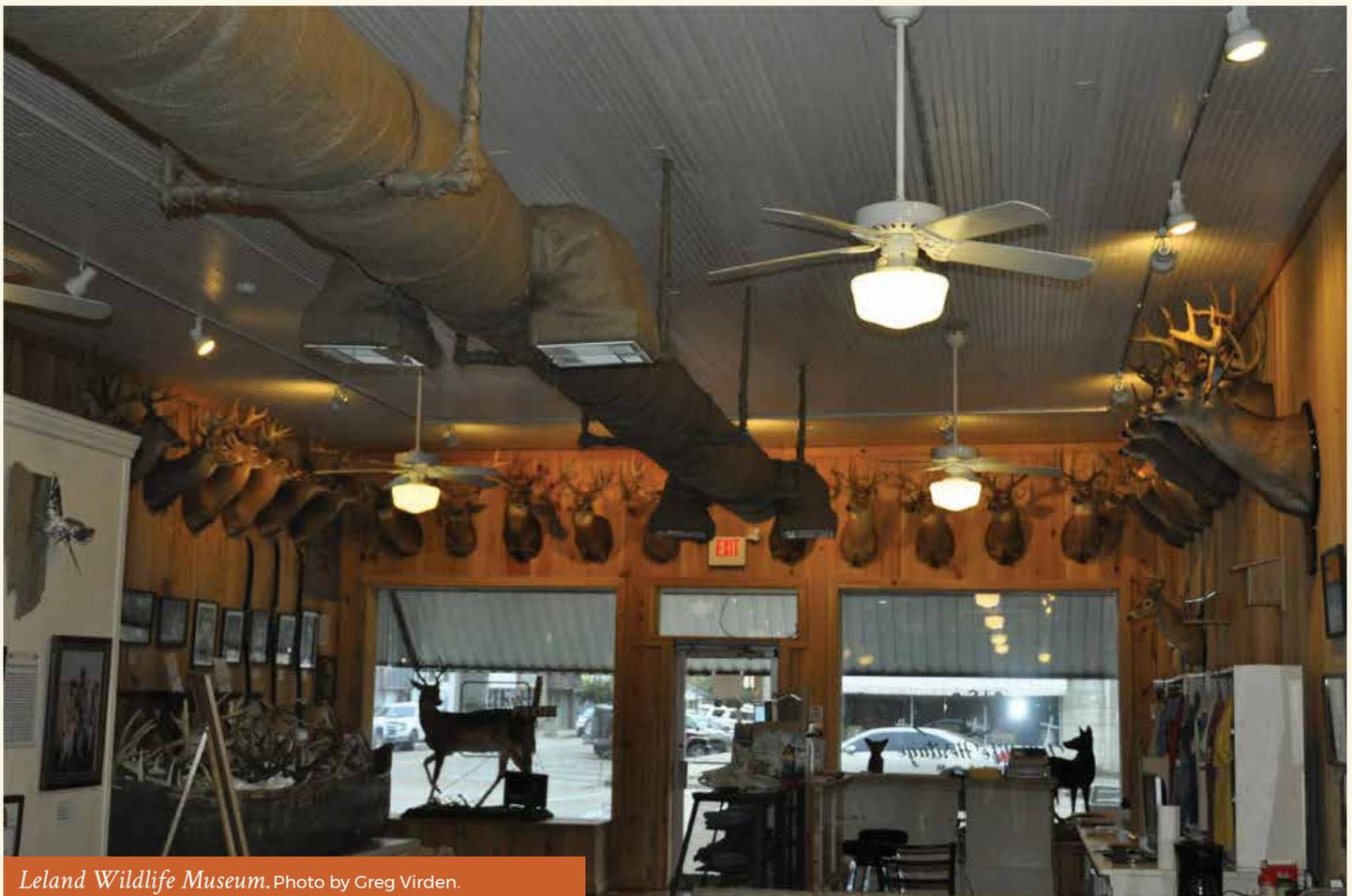
In 1977, dissatisfied deer hunters on a Mississippi River hunting club named Davis Island, called in Dr. Harry Jacobson from Mississippi State University, to consult on how to grow big-antlered bucks on the property. This project turned into a ten-year groundbreaking study entitled, *Deer Condition Response to Changing Harvest Strategy, Davis Island, Mississippi*.

In essence, Jacobson put Davis Island on the MDWFP deer harvest collection data program within the Deer Management Assistance Program (DMAP). He initiated the then unheard of practice of shooting does, and he implemented antler restricted harvest requirements. The rest is history, so to speak. The results were impressive and dramatic. All deer

body weights went up, antler base and beam lengths increased, average doe-fetus ratios went from 1 to 2.2, and, lactation rates increased. The yearling buck harvest gradually reduced to less than 15% from over 75% of the antlered harvest. Peak rut moved two to three weeks earlier in association with change in buck harvest strategy.

We had come from plentiful deer at the turn of the century, to no deer in 1930, to maybe too plentiful deer by 1980. Everybody was getting into buck age management and busting some does. "Don't shoot that young buck, he'll be a good one next year, take the doe instead," became the common mantra.

Today, it appears we are coming around full circle and back to reducing bag limits and protecting does. The Roman poet Phaedrus once said, "Things are not always what they seem; the first appearance deceives



Leland Wildlife Museum. Photo by Greg Virden.

many; the intelligence of a few perceives what has been carefully hidden." I'm not being condescending to anyone, in any manner, and I do not purport to be a biologist. I'll leave deer management with the experts. I will, however, point out, and I won't even quote this one... doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results...

According to the March, April, and May MDWFP commission minutes, Larry Castle, Director of Technical Programs, specifically addresses the "lack of deer being seen" across the state, and the changes made in response. See *2016-2017 Deer Hunter Survey Results*. The changes include reducing bag limits in some cases, and according to the May minutes, "suspend[ing] antlerless opportunity except during archery only and youth gun seasons" on public lands.

In early September, Brian Broom published a short summation in the *Clarion-Ledger* concerning deer hunter dissatisfaction. He wrote, "Mississippi hunters complained more loudly about low numbers of deer in the 2016 season than in any year most can remember. Hunters in some areas cited low sightings, less deer sign and fewer pictures of deer on game cameras as indicators of a declining population. The latest hunter survey estimates mirror what hunters are claiming with an estimate of 244,795 deer taken. That is roughly 10,000 fewer deer than the 2015 estimate and the lowest in 31 years."

"This is the lowest total harvest since 1985," said William McKinley, MDWFP Deer Program coordinator. "The primary drop over the last five years is buck harvests."

Maybe there is an overlooked explanation, or, at the very least, a significant contributing factor to this malady. Read on.

Referring back to the *2016-2017 Deer Hunter Survey Reports*, specifically, the question, "Has deer behavior changed in the area you hunt – for example, are deer only moving at night?" Of the total respondents, 68% said yes and 21% said no. What are the biological ramifications of changes of deer behavior? How can you harvest deer if you can't see them? Hmmmm...

Current technology, GPS in particular (which allows the 24/7 tracking of an animal from the comfort of an air-conditioned office), is providing a whole new perspective on deer behavior, deserving a fresh new look at current management strategies. Especially, to rifle hunter pressure; it's counterintuitive. The longer the rifle season, the less deer hunters are going to see.

All of the studies cited below are must-reads, and are beyond the scope of the article. But, one thing is clear. Once rifle season opens, deer become scarce and the longer the season lasts, then they become even more scarce. With our recent weapon of choice laws extending through January, and in south Mississippi through mid-February, the question remains: is this a major contributing factor to the recent "lack of deer being seen?" Granted, some areas really are suffering from low populations and/or over harvesting.

Clint McCoy, a graduate student at Auburn University, conducted a three-year study on a 6,400-acre tract in South Carolina where he placed GPS collars on thirty-seven bucks. He found that after just 12 hours of hunting pressure in one location, the odds of a buck showing up within "killing range" of a stand was cut in half.

Penn State performed a five-year study which involved forty radio-collared deer, both bucks and does, on

four vast tracts of land in three state forests. During the firearms season, researchers received deer-movement transmissions every 20 minutes. As for their "behaviors in archery season, there's nothing to suggest these deer are being impacted by the hunting that's going on to any great extent," said Duane Diefenbach, leader of the Pennsylvania Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit, and one of the study's leaders. "But once the rifle season begins, we see some pretty dramatic differences. Some of these bucks will leave their home range and go places we've never seen them in the previous 10 months. It's pretty amazing."

From the Nobles Institute Study: "We found that collared buck observations were greatest during the first weekend of the Oklahoma deer rifle season. Observations of collared bucks declined eighty-three percent from the first to the third weekend in the low-density unit. In the high-density unit, buck observations declined sixty-four percent from the first to second weekend. Despite more hunters in the high-density unit, hunters did not observe any collared bucks on the last weekend. The GPS collars showed the bucks were still in the high-density unit but successfully evaded the hunters."

With this in mind, I imported some WMA harvest data off the MDWFP website for the last two years and dropped it into some sortable data grids. The top five WMA's had an interesting correlation. By "top," I mean best producing, or the average number of acres required per harvested deer, average number of man-days per harvest, and the number of +=4.5 old bucks taken. Four of the five had limited gun seasons. They are also more intensely managed, but that did not correlate as strongly. You can

find those grids on the MBA website. I'm no statistician, and it could be purely coincidental, but I thought it was noteworthy. Unfortunately, NWR's do not publish harvest data.

Furthermore, in the *Field and Stream* October 1988 issue is an article that further highlights the results of a limited rifle season. The centerpiece of the article was an interview with Tim Wilkins, the manager of the NWR complex at the time. According to the author James McCafferty, "[the refuge]... consistently produces bucks

unlike any other in the Magnolia state."

I contacted Wilkins and inquired about his management strategy at the time. He said, "My goal was to maximize hunter opportunities and deer harvest while maintaining an older buck component. This was accomplished by limiting gun hunting and maximizing archery hunting. This method resulted in the deer harvest being split almost 50/50 between gun and archery hunters. The hunting season began with archery, followed

by two one-day youth hunts, a two-day senior citizen hunt, three two-day muzzleloader hunts, and then archery again. All gun hunting was over by mid-December, the peak of the rut. I did not limit what was harvested, but recommended that hunters not shoot young bucks that had four or more points. This method worked very well on this NWR and resulted in the harvest of some excellent older class bucks and a balanced deer herd structure."

The results were amazing.



*Some of Mississippi's optimally managed WMAs offer something for everyone. A quality hunting experience, great chance to see deer, and an opportunity to harvest a mature buck. Photo by Josh Clark.*

Reference the Leland Wildlife Museum photo. All of those mounts are Pope and Young (P & Y) and came off the complex, with the exception of two, while managed by Wilkins. They were donated to the museum by MBA lifetime member Bobby Woods. Woods does not discuss deer hunting publicly much anymore. I did manage to track him down though. He was out of state bow hunting. Apparently more hunters than ever are now pursuing whitetails out of state. Understandably so, because it's hard to enjoy the hunt when you are dodging flashlights going in, and then having to watch people walk all under your stand while attempting to hunt. He said he rarely hunts it now because it's just not the same, so let's just leave it at that. He feels partly to blame for the crowds and said, "at the time I enjoyed being written about and published and all, and I really thought I was helping hunters in general and recruiting a lot of bow hunters to the sport. But after a while I couldn't get away from the telephone calls and 'friends' wanting to know where to go."

The amount of hunters showing up to hunt that place was off the charts. According to Wilkins, "we had hunters from twenty-six different states." Imagine all of these hunters on one relatively small piece of property.

Two very important distinctions need further clarification in grasping the different management styles between state and federal land. One needs a basic understanding of how Mississippi's wildlife laws are created and how the MDWFP is funded.

All public land in Mississippi is bound by state wildlife law. Within the framework of state law is tremendous latitude on weapon type, season length and type, sex taken and bag limits by type. The MDWFP Commission sets this on Wildlife Management Areas

and for the most part, individual complex managers on National Wildlife Refuges.

MBA life member Mark Livingston, probably one of the most knowledgeable on the subject within the association, said, "I truly believe that each governmental authority that regulates these different types of properties believe that they are managing for the wildlife first; *but within the context of user desire.*" The big difference between the two is how they are funded. State land is funded, according to the MDWFP's website;

... The majority of its [MDWFP] operating funds come from hunters and anglers. Our hunters and anglers pay, as they have for many years, nearly all the bills for on-the-ground wildlife conservation and support them, not to benefit themselves, but to benefit all Mississippians.

Additionally, the MDWFP receives funds from the Pittman-Robertson Act.

... The number of individual hunting license holders increases our state's share of the total P-R apportionment. Mississippi's apportionment is directly related to the number of hunters we have. Thus, if the number of license holders in Mississippi declines, other states may receive our share of funding.

So, any change in WMA wildlife management hunting strategy, continues Livingston, "could potentially reduce hunter participation [...] as that is a source of revenue that they can't afford to lose." Obviously, the state is going to be much more sensitive toward hunter participation. Even with that it is still a tremendous squeeze and has its implications.

For instance, I was able to run

down Roger Tankesly, the MDWFP regional area biologist for our largest—and probably most hunted—national forest. Tankesly believes the lack of funding for timber management, prescribed burns, and the equipment and access needed for planting and maintaining food plots, limits his ability to bring and keep the habitat at its full potential. As a result, the deer carrying capacity is lower than it should be.

Wilkins, now a retired NWF complex manager, who is currently a consultant and certified biologist with Wildlife Strategies, Inc., further expounds:

Carrying capacity generally is defined as the number of deer that can utilize an area without causing habitat degradation. A biologist who checks an area for over browsing by deer will first determine if a browse line exists. A browse line is generally defined as the lack of browse from the ground to the level a deer can reach. In severe cases, there is no understory vegetation giving the appearance that a flood or some other natural occurrence has killed the lower level vegetation. In less severe cases, the biologist would look for the presence of preferred browse species. If these species are heavily browsed or missing, the deer population is exceeding the carrying capacity. If there is an abundance of these species and deer browsing is not having a significant impact, then the area is likely at carrying capacity.

Data collection is an important component of determining carrying capacity. Deer weights, lactation rates, ages, antler measurements,

etc., help to determine harvest recommendations. Cameras can be used to estimate deer populations (buck & doe), herd health, fawn recruitment, and antler size. The MDWFP has developed a survey plan using bait at camera sites

Once carrying capacity is determined, the objective is to harvest enough deer each year to reduce the population to a level below that capacity.

Once you determine the harvest goal, the objective should be to remove the surplus as quickly as possible. The food these deer would have consumed will be available to keep the remaining deer healthy.

He also added, "Scheduling hunting dates should have two primary components.

First is to determine the number

of deer to be harvested each year. This number is influenced by many factors and includes herd health, recruitment, habitat carrying capacity (availability of agricultural crops, food plots, browse/cover, mast production, hunting pressure on lands adjacent to the public hunting area, access to water, etc.) and the attitude of adjacent land owners who could be negatively impacted by deer utilizing their agricultural crops.

Second is to determine the desired age structure of the deer herd."

With all that said, Mississippi arguably has some of the best white-tailed deer hunting in the country, and the best wildlife biologists to boot. Armed with more deer data than any other state, Mississippi leads the nation in the percentage of 3.5 years and older bucks in the harvest. We also have the premier deer research facility in the nation, MSU Deer Lab, who, by the

way, have just started a GPS collared deer study in Madison County. I am on top of this study with veteran deer biologist William T. McKinley, MDWFP Deer Program Coordinator. Don't let your membership expire! We will be following this one closely.

In closing, I would like to suggest that the biggest obstacle to optimal deer management are deer hunters collectively, and we may want to modify our culture and behavior a bit. It's counterproductive to squabble among ourselves. Our focus should be on the resource first and hunting opportunity second. Let's come together on the same page and get it done. The state can not afford to lose any hunters, and we certainly cannot afford to desecrate *our* deer, for personal benefit or any other reason.



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**HUNTING**  **GROUND****S**



**W**hen the clock struck midnight and January 2016 began I never would have imagined that my life would have been so much different as it was then. A desire to follow the Lord and plant a church was on my family's heart and we were off to pursue that calling with no reservations. We quit our jobs, packed up our brand new home, loaded the wagons and headed to a place we felt God was leading us to start a brand new Southern Baptist

with many people in our small town of Shenandoah, IA and had gained permission to hunt on some local farms. I will make a disclaimer: it is not as easy as some of the magazine articles make it out to be to gain permission from farmers to hunt. That and the fact that much of the timbered property is leased or already spoken for makes hunting ground come at a premium. My blessing was that I am a bow hunter. Many locals in my area choose to gun hunt so finding a good



Church. Luckily for me that place was Iowa!

To say that trophy deer didn't cross my mind at the prospect of moving to the Midwest would be a lie. I have been an avid bow hunter for nearly 17 years and have hunted the Midwest for the past 10 years for whitetails and turkeys. My enthusiasm for the work and for the play was through the roof!

Fast forward to September. By this time I had formed relationships

archery spot proved to be fruitful.

Scouting proved to be a joy. Literally, my very first trail camera photo was of a buck that would eventually grow over 170" of antler. I was ecstatic. However, the only place that I had to hunt this deer was a corn field edge. In fact, my access was to the field side and not the timber side of the edge. That means that there was no place to hang a tree stand. While scouting from afar I noticed that

several deer, including the booner and a couple of his high racked buddies, were using a drainage ditch to cross from field to field. This ditch is only about 50 yards wide by 100 yards long but a plan was being formulated. I would place a ground blind just inside the corn on the edge of the drainage ditch and pray to not be winded or spotted.

Season opened up on October 1st and I had been granted residency in Iowa which allowed me an archery tag. My enthusiasm to hunt waned as I check the wind for opening day. I absolutely had to have a North wind to hunt my location but a direct south wind was in the forecast for the foreseeable future. I snuck in one quick "marginal wind" hunt that first week but quickly realized that I would need my perfect wind. After all, I was not dealing with "average" bucks. These guys were big and they didn't get big from being careless.

On October 7th I finally got the break in the wind that I needed. A cool snap swept through the area and the temps were going to drop nearly 20 degrees with a nice breeze from the north. I knew this was my chance.

As I settled into the ground blind I quickly retrieved the card from the trail camera and checked it with my card reader. To my surprise the pictures were showing that the big bucks had changed their pattern and were coming in just after dark. However, as I drew to the end of the pictures and focused in on the day of my hunt I realized that my giant, "Captain Hook" as my family calls him, showed up in the first ever morning daylight picture that very day. My enthusiasm peaked back up as I heard the loud crunch of an approaching deer heading my way from the north.

A yearling buck was being followed by a two and a half year old eight point. I watched the two deer feed for nearly 20 minutes until the larger of the two got spooky. He glared into the timber and above the sage brush I could see a rack of antlers approaching. I quickly identified the deer as a shooter and assumed it was my crack at the booner. I readied my bow and took the first ethical shot that I had once the deer cleared onto my side of the property. I released the arrow and hit the deer solidly. It made for a short track job.

Upon approaching the downed buck and to my surprise I had not killed "Captain Hook." However, I had harvested an unknown buck and could not have been happier. My first ever Iowa bow kill took place after a couple of short hours of total hunting and I had a 154" 10-point in the bag. The impressive thing about the Iowan was that his antlers were dwarfed by his massive body. My local Department of Natural Resources (DNR) representatives assessed the deer to weigh between 280-300 lbs. A true sight to behold, indeed!

My hunting was over relatively quickly in Iowa so I turned my attention to Kansas. I have hunted in Kansas with my family and friends for the past 10 years and have established quite a relationship with the state and some of its people. I had teamed up with Mike Ruddle of Central Plains Outfitters to come in and hunt since I was now living so close to the area. He has been a dear friend to me and my family for over a decade now.

I conducted our Sunday services at the newly established Christ Point Baptist Church on November 6th and made my way Southwest to Lindsborg that evening. I enjoyed a great visit with Mike and he and I strategized and checked trail camera photos. I did a self-guided hunt due to familiarity with the area. It is pretty sweet, though, to have someone there on the farm to keep an eye on patterns and routines. By this time much of that was thrown out the window due to great rutting activity but we still knew which bucks were living where.

I hunted a particular buck on a particular favorite farm for the first sit. I have a love affair with that farm so I went more for the nostalgia than anything. That evening, I chose to sit on some property close to the lodge. On my way to the stand for the evening hunt I saw a shooter buck standing beneath my stand upon



approach. I had to watch him for a while until he cleared the area. He was one of two deer I saw that day.

The next morning, election Tuesday, was exciting. It wasn't exciting because of an abundance of deer sightings but more so because of the high prevailing winds. I was nearly blown out of the tree. I quickly ended my morning hunt on my nostalgic farm because I didn't think I could hit a deer if it did walk by. I drove back to camp to regroup.

By that time Mike had called to check in on the day's activities and he highly encouraged me to go and sit where I had seen the shooter. His thought process was that the deer was cruising the area checking for does and he would likely stick to that area. I obliged and set out early so as not to be busted like the day before.

This was one of the more exciting hunts I've ever had. At the 3:00 hour that evening I saw a small buck cross a wheat field some 300 yards away. I took my Primos Buck Roar and wailed away. It didn't turn the buck but it immediately got the attention of another unseen buck and brought him to the base of the tree. He was not a shooter but exciting none the less. This occurrence happened no less than five times that evening. I would grunt and a new buck would show up. The young guys were definitely on their feet.

Up to that point all I had seen were very young deer and they all came from the same direction. Naturally I dedicated the bulk of my attention to the creek bottom where they were running. Shame on me. After a session of grunting during the "witching hour" I turned to place my grunt tube down and caught something out of the corner of my eye to my immediate left. It was shocking. The 148" 10-point was standing no more than 16 yards and looking in my direction. I thought I was pegged but the deer calmly eased



his head back to the ground and began scent checking the area for does. In one smooth motion I grabbed my bow from the E-Z hanger, attached my release and drew the bow. The deer entered a clearing and I released an arrow into his vitals. I had the pleasure of watching him expire no more than 60 yards into an uncut milo field. Again, I had harvested a scale bender. This deer was guessed to be nearly 270 pounds.

To say that I was blessed this deer season would be an understatement. I've taken some great deer in my lifetime but this year topped the cake. I am forever grateful to the Lord for

blessing me so abundantly.

More importantly, I am grateful that the Lord called me to serve Him. I have never had more satisfaction in my life that I have had in pursuing and living within His will. To God be the Glory. I'm happy to report that Christ Point Baptist Church is about 4 months ahead of schedule as far as our projected growth is concerned. There have already been many lives touched by this ministry and I pray that many more will come to the saving grace of Jesus Christ. To God be the Glory!

# Margano's PASSION

STORY BY LARENA RIVES  
PHOTOS BY WILL RIVES





Morgan Rives celebrated her 12th birthday on November 8th. She has done more in her 12 years with a bow than most adults do in a lifetime. There isn't much time for anything else but archery in Morgan Rives' life. She has been shooting a bow since she was 5 and trying to pull one back since she could pick one up. It's in her blood. Her dad is a bow shooter and she has surely picked up the love of archery and hunting from him. She would beg to go hunting when she was two, to which mom would say, "No, your too little." Mom eventually gave in after numerous weeks of begging. She was hooked from the first time dad let her go with him and sit in the blind. When it's not hunting season, she is traveling all over the United States shooting her bow at Indoor and Outdoor tournaments. She is a

member of National Field Archery Association (NFAA), USA Archery, Scholastic 3D Association (S3DA) and Archery Shooters Association (ASA). She is a busy girl to say the least. She is planning a trip to Colorado next year to hopefully harvest her first elk. She has harvested bucks, does, and turkeys with her bow. She took her first buck in January of 2012 when she was just 7 years old. She has already signed a letter of intent from Mississippi College in Jackson to shoot for their collegiate archery team as soon as she graduates from high school. She wants to one day be an archery coach and bring other people into the sport. She loves how much the sport has taught her and how many wonderful people she has met in the archery world. Lifelong friends she would have never met had it not been for her love of archery and

her travels in the archery circuits. She is currently going to school and on weekends she hunts. She will soon be practicing and getting ready for the Vegas Shoot in February. She came in second place last year. She also won two National titles with her bow. One for shooting the S3DA Nationals and the other was for NFAA National Outdoors in Yankton, South Dakota. So she is a two-time National Champion. She is looking forward to moving up to youth this month since she turned 12. Her love of archery has definitely opened a lot of doors for her. From meeting lifelong friends, to feeding her family, to going to college. The possibilities in archery are endless if you work hard and are as dedicated as she is to the sport.

**Girls Rock!**



# THE River Buck

STORY AND PHOTOS BY ANDY STANFORD

**T**he hunt started beside a harvested corn field, by an old road bed. The road bed at one time crossed the river. The bridge had rotted and had been torn down, but the old road bed remained. The road bed served as a great travel route for bucks, who would skirt the edges of the field to make their scrape lines. The rain was heavy during the afternoon before the hunt. I was in my Loc-On at the opposite side of the corn field when I spotted movement. Low and behold, a 170" class buck arose out of the road bed to observe the field for

does. I tried every trick in the book, but the old giant calmly turned and went right back into the road bed.

The next day at lunch, I went and set up another loc-on stand in the road bed. I was pumped! That afternoon, I was in the new stand and a mid 130" eight point came out at around fifteen yards, but I opted to let him walk. About an hour before dark, I heard something bellow like a bull from a jungle of thicket which was across the river. It bellowed again and I heard splashing in the river which had a draw running parallel to the old road

bed. To my amazement, the noise was headed towards me! I was paying close attention to the river, which was swollen from two days of continuous rain. The giant buck was swimming my way. As soon as he hit dry ground, he let out a bellow that could be heard for miles. As soon as the bellow was finished, he ran straight for the tree I was in! Once he got to my tree, he immediately did a 360 degree turn and headed straight back across the river. I had already come back to full draw with my bow and yelled at the giant buck but he never missed a stride. I



where he had been coming into the river at. When I reached the river's edge, the eight point that I saw earlier was listening to the giant buck coming back down the river like an enraged bull! The brute was running towards me but I knew I had to wait for him to jump in the river to get a good shot on him. He hit the water at full speed and flew up in the air like a Labrador leaving a duck blind! He slammed into the running water which made him submerge in it for a second but let out a bellow once he got above the surface like I had never heard before. At this point, I came to full draw and placed my thirty-yard pin right below the surface of the water where his vitals were. As soon as I touched the release I knew it was the shot of a lifetime! The arrow penetrated right through the vital area and the buck tried to fight

the current but was defeated. Once he drifted to the other side, I stripped down and swam to the buck in the frigid river and retrieved my trophy. The wound I had seen on him earlier that day was from an expandable broad head under the backbone. I could stick my hand all of the way through the deer's body. I guess the cold water was easing the pain, that's why he was running through it like a bull on steroids.

The buck gross scored at 151" and weighed 225 pounds. The buck sported fourteen points that scored. The arrow I shot entered the buck under the water behind the left shoulder and through the right side. The arrow popped out the deer's body and floated to the top of the water like a cork. This way truly a hunt to remember and pass down to others.

thought he was gone for sure this time. But after about five minutes, he came right back across the river making those same loud bellows like before. The buck did this same repetition about three times but I wasn't able to get a shot on him even at around five yards. I did notice a large wound close to the top of his back, but I didn't pay it any attention.

Darkness was closing in and I knew that the only way that I was going to tag this buck was to crawl down out of my loc-on and get to where the bridge had been torn down because that is



# HOME

STORY BY BRIAN MONTGOMERY  
PHOTOS BY COURTNEY MONTGOMERY

# BOYS



Throughout the years of sportsmen chasing white-tailed deer, conversations have routinely focused on where big bucks live, how much they travel, and if it's a big risk to pass a future bruiser in hopes of him getting bigger. We've all said, if I don't shoot him my neighbor will, or he could be gone tomorrow, but research and my own observations right here in the magnolia state suggests otherwise.

The first buck I had "history" with occurred in 2005 on a property in Tallahatchie Co. The buck was a wide 10 point with a huge frame. I was a guest of a friend but he was gracious enough to allow me to sort of, do what I wanted on the property. It was a great place to deer hunt with tremendous genetics and all the food a white tailed buck could gobble down! At this time in the progression of game cameras they were unreliable and only took a limited number of pictures unlike the proficient endless photos we expect today. With limited game camera pics it wasn't "expected" to capture every buck on the property and there was not a single picture of the wide 10 we knew was in the camp. It was a crisp December morning when I looked up the bean field to see a huge frame deer chasing a doe. This particular morning I was rifle hunting in a shooting house but the buck was only 200 yards to my west. I glassed him for almost 5 minutes and decided to pass him thinking he was only 3 ½ years old and we really were striving to shoot 4 ½ or older bucks. He was an 18" 10 point that would score in the mid 130's by my estimation. A nice buck but man what would he be

next year. For 2005 that was the only verified sighting of the wide 10 but I knew where he went to with the doe and it was an area of the farm with very little traffic so I was pretty sure where he was living. Spring of 2006 found me scouting a spot to kill the wide 10 with my bow. It was a lot of Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) grass and thicket that headed up to a tree line and was bordered by a swamp. At the head was a little grove of trees that would hold a loc-on tree stand and the area around the grove would make a perfect little food plot. This would be the perfect ambush if the wide 10 lived there like I thought. Over the summer I hatched the plan and cleared the spot

for the food plot and had to do lots of chain saw work to create shooting lanes but by the middle of September the food plot was up, stand was hung, and everything was ready, almost. My plan was to not go back in that area again but rather wait for a south west wind in December when the pre rut was starting hopefully the wide 10 would be comfortable as a fat man in his easy chair on Sunday evening! The access was all that need to be established, I planned to boat through the swamp, approximately 500 yards with a pirogue, get out and walk 20 yards to get in the stand. So I placed my little wooden boat on the edge of the swamp and it was dry as a bone.

One would question how all of these pieces could possibly come together, but stay tuned.

First week of December 2006 found my buddy sitting in that same shooting house with his son and who do you think blows out of the thicket? Ol wide 10 right behind a doe running her like a walker hound during dog season! The young hunter couldn't get a shot but they both disappeared in the thicket, same thicket my ambush was situated in. That intel was all I needed, with my swamp full of water all I was waiting for was a south west wind and I knew where I was going. Only a couple days later I was at work and saw we had that wind I needed





and here I go, I'm taking off. As I crept across the swamp I couldn't help but be full of anticipation. It was like Christmas Eve for a 6 year old. When I reached the bank I eased up to the edge and could see the food plot, this was the first time I'd seen it since I planted it in mid September. It was green and pretty, only further fueled my excitement. I climbed up in my stand and just waited. As soon as the sun hit the horizon I looked up the narrow grass field and saw a buck. He was a nice mature 9 point. A shooter but not the wide 10. I would have shot him but he just walked directly to the swamp edge and stayed

75 yards away. I grunted a few times but he didn't turn. I did notice he kept looking back. About 5 minutes later I see what he was looking at. All I can see are the antlers of the wide 10. He's standing motionless on the tree line. He stood there for a few minutes then started walking directly toward the tree as if he had done it every day for a month. Slowly he headed directly toward me. Finally he got to the food plot and walked in at 30 yards and just put his head down and fed. Without a care in the world he just grazed like a hungry cow. As he fed I became more and more anxious. As all bowhunters know, the more time he hangs around,

the more time for something to go wrong. Finally he moved into 27 yards, turned broadside and I was ready. With a well placed arrow the wide 10 expired within 75 yards. At 22 inches wide and a score of 148, he was awesome but the coolest aspect of the hunt was the journey to that point. That buck lived there and I was just lucky enough to get enough clues to put it together.

The next most notable buck that was a "Home Boy" was the high brow tine buck. The property was in Oktibbeha co, which is not known for big toad bucks like Tallahatchie County. This story starts in 2012 with

a new property to scout and set up. By now, game cameras are reliable and I'm using them extensively. Right out of the gate, first set of pics on this property was the high brow buck. He was cool, tall brow tines, kicker off the G2, and mid 130's. That season I didn't see him a single time but photographs of him appeared on the camera like clock work. He lived on 90 acres and although I wasn't fortunate enough to take this particular buck, I was awarded a beautiful 145" 9 point that I had no picture of during the month of December. He just came out of the ground, or so I thought. We soon discovered this buck lived very close as my hunting buddy's dad found both sides of his shed antlers from the previous year within 1/2 mile of where I killed him. It was becoming clear you

can have a mature buck living close enough to be seen all the time or just far enough to never be seen. I thought the high brow buck was 4 1/2 years old in 2012 and was really looking forward to seeing what he turned into. August 2013, when I ran my first game camera pics, didn't disappoint. He had blown up, all the tines were long and he was a regular customer. Still living right there on a 90 acre property. He was regularly visiting a clover patch that I'd planted the previous year. Another observation to note, it seems that when most bucks reach a certain age they become more careless and less nocturnal in their habits. I was getting pictures of him in the food plot in daylight. October 13, 2013, right at dark, look who shows up! The high brow buck strolls right out into the

food plot and with a great shot at 37 yards, he's down! After hundreds of photos of this buck it's all over and I was ecstatic. The buck was a main frame 9 point with the tell tell sticker off his G2 gross scoring 148 inches.

These two stories are great successes in my bowhunting career but they are meant to illustrate the local nature of mature whitetail bucks. Included are lots of pictures of bucks that friends and myself have been able to chronicle over multiple years in the same area. They are not all trophies by score but anytime you are fortunate to match wits with a mature buck, regardless of score, you have your hands full. This season don't feel like you have to kill a buck, with a little luck he will be right there next year, only bigger and better!





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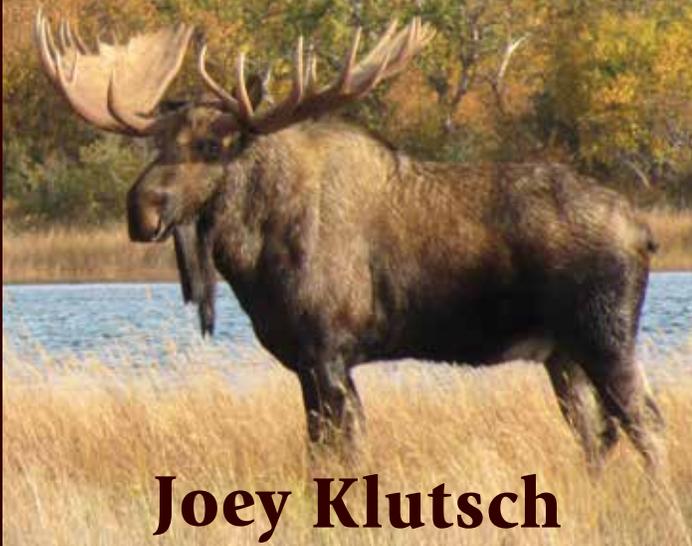
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# STATEWIDE WHITETAIL RUT DATES

# MISSISSIPPI DELTA

BY JASON MEYER

**W**hen I was younger all of my friends and I wanted to be the one that killed the big 'un on Thanksgiving. Deer camp was always full of people and we were eager to claim bragging rights. Rut during the Thanksgiving holidays was usually a hit or miss. However, it wasn't unusual for good deer to be taken during the holidays. Lots of people were off work and with more hunters, more eyes on the ground and more ground covered, odds were someone would get a good one!

It's officially here, the Mississippi Delta rut! I personally witnessed for the first time this year in Bolivar county, a small 8 point chasing several does across food plots on November 19. Some friends of mine said they saw a few chasing earlier that week. Hunters across the levee on the Mississippi riverside reported the same. The bucks weren't full blown, tongue hanging out, and out of breath, but they were interested. Typically, rut is December 3rd through December 10th, but it is possible the recent cold front we've had may push rut up a few days this year.

There there is what we call the second rut. I've seen deer chasing Christmas Eve well into the new year. I was lucky enough to drop a buck who was just plain love struck stupid! He crashed through the woods sounding like someone driving a Ranger through a cane break, mouth open, drooling and looking for his doe. Man I love it! Heck, I used to get in rut myself when I was in high school and college!

Years ago on December 5th, my wife and I rattled up a nice 8 point after being in the stand just 10 minutes. I ranged him, pinned him and stuck him. I will never forget our conversation that day. She said hunting isn't that hard because all you do sit in the woods! HA!! (She comes from a golfing family).

While I love hunting the rut, some bowhunters say they aren't as fond of it as I. It can be difficult, especially if a buck is already with a doe. Unless you can pull him by calling it's basically fingers crossed she comes by you. Decoys work about 50% of the time. And while I've had good bucks respond to decoys don't be fooled thinking it is a sure thing as in all the hunting shows. Remember, they work throughout the year to get one hunt for your viewing pleasure. No matter your preference, rut is coming! Get out there and have some fun! May all of you have a blessed and safe hunting season. Happy Holidays!

# STATEWIDE WHITETAIL RUT DATES

# SOUTH MISSISSIPPI

BY JEFF WAITS

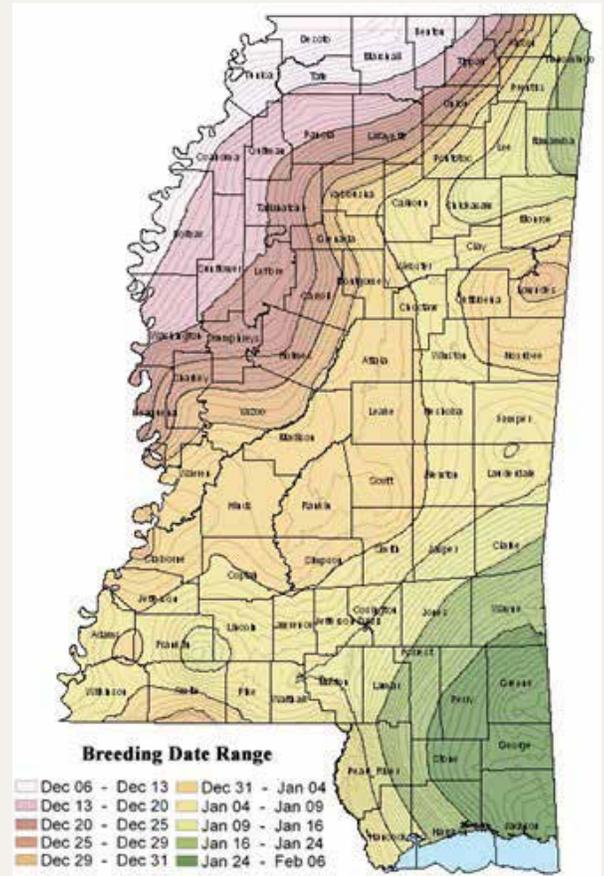
## Timing and Strategy for South Mississippi Region

The southeast zone is quite different from the rest of the state in regard to terrain, agriculture, temperatures and rut cycles. These lower counties experience later rut cycles than other parts of the state with the coastal counties being the latest. Using the breeding cycle calendar from the MDWFP website, peak breeding dates range more than a month long from January 4 - February 6. (<https://www.mdwfp.com/wildlife-hunting/deer-program/deer-breeding-date-map/>) The differences aren't dictated by latitude differences (north to south) as most of us have been led to believe, but rather are more impacted by longitude differences (west to east). Most western counties in the southeastern zone (Marion, Lamar, Pearl River and Hancock counties) rut dates range from January 4 - January 16. The more central counties (Jones, Forrest, Stone and Harrison counties) are two weeks later ranging from January 16- February 6. The eastern most counties (Greene, George and Jackson, along with parts of Stone and Perry counties) have the latest dates which range from January 24 - February 6. As a matter of perspective, consider the time frame begins a month after northwestern counties have finished.

Rut hunting tactics differ between hunters. Typical methods of hunting scrapes, funnels or travel corridors and calling can all be successful. But the most successful tactic is to hunt where the does are since the bucks are focused on finding estrous does. The most dependable method for most bow hunters is to hunt a food source. Since the rut in southern counties is so late in the year, most food sources have played out which makes green fields the primary food source for bucks and does alike. Whether hunting from a treestand or well-hidden ground blind, food sources can be the ticket to getting that buck during the late southern Mississippi rut!

## Mississippi White-tailed Deer Simulated Mean Conception Dates

<https://www.mdwfp.com/wildlife-hunting/deer-program/deer-breeding-date-map/>



# STATEWIDE WHITETAIL RUT DATES

## EAST CENTRAL MS

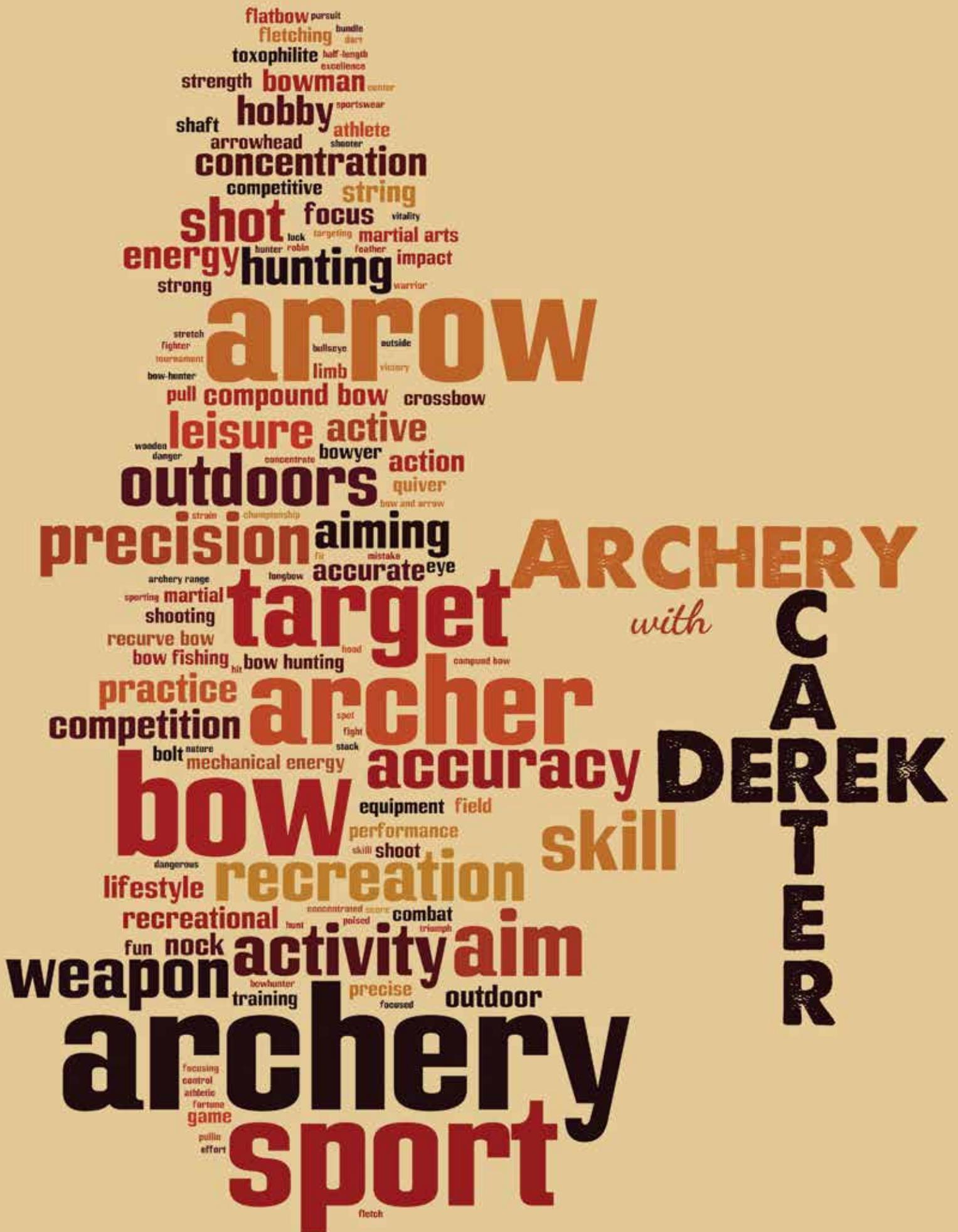
BY BRIAN MONTGOMERY

In east central Mississippi (Eastern highway 82 corridor) the whitetail rut is sporadic like most of the state but if you have to nail down a time to be in the woods its from December 20th through January 1 year-in year-out. The bucks start pre-rut activity around thanksgiving making scrapes and rubs. This activity last through middle December at which time the first does usually cycle into estrous. When these first few does cycle, you will start to see more mature bucks on trail camera for a real short time period, only a few days during early to middle December.

This is an indication at least a doe or two in your area is in heat. I'd say this is one of the most vulnerable times of the rut for a mature buck to do something stupid like walk out into the wide open in daylight. Large percentage of your does will start to come enter their estrus cycle around the 20th of December through January 1st. In most of our region we have plenty of does and



bucks get hard to see except when a doe lures him into a food plot or when he's searching for the next available one to breed. According to research, a large number of twin fawns are sired by different fathers. This tells us something about the whitetail breeding process. A buck breeds a doe, then a bigger tougher buck comes along and takes her from him and breeds her again while she's in estrous. The other buck is then back on the hunt. This period without a doe is when bucks are most at risk during this period. Then after peak breeding period, January 1 on, is when bucks know the end is in sight and they are frantic to find those last few receptive does. This is the time to harvest the most mature buck in your area. The nature of a mature buck one of wise travel routes and times, reserved in behavior, very unlike their young counterparts. When they find a doe, they take her to a sanctuary and control the process. That all applies except when they panic anticipating the end of breeding for another year. Watch your trail cameras, you can learn lots about the status of your local rut. Pre-rut, you will see lots of does, once breeding starts, young bucks and few does and the occasional mature buck. Post rut, the does will be back and you may start to notice strangers, deer you don't know. Consider these dates and thoughts and you will be more successful this year in east central Mississippi.



Indoor archery in Mississippi is as next to non-existent as a flourishing elk herd; however, it is growing in popularity, and for good reason. Indoor shooting provides very important details to a shooter on his or her foundation: shot execution. Unlike 3D there is no wind, change in lighting, yardage variation, uneven footing, or messy terrain features to deal with. By cutting out all of the variables that come with outdoor shooting, there are only two things that can cause misses. Rarely, there is a problem with the bow itself. I never recommend looking there first. Most of the time when an arrow does not reach the x-ring, it is the fault of the operator. Knowing this, a shooter is more open-minded to form changes and shot execution techniques that can pay huge dividends on the 3D course the following spring.

People are competitive by nature. In fact, it would be hard to find a person who shoots competitive archery who is not at least a little bit competitive. This creates a problem for using indoor as a training tool. If you are going to use it to become a better archer, check your ego at the door. Remember that this is a practice session and you are there to learn. Learning is highly inhibited by the notion that you are the best in the world. As the old saying goes, "if you think you are ripe, you will rot. If you think you are green, you will ripen."

The first thing I like to do when shooting a round of indoor is to warm up completely. When it starts to feel natural and I have no tension in my arms, hands, and shoulders I feel sufficiently warmed up. I am ready to execute the best shots I can. When I prepare to shoot the first thing I do is clear my mind, look at the x-ring. I tell myself, "that is where my dot will be when the bow fires." From that moment on, I never take my eyes off of the x-ring. I do not look to see if my arrow is staying on the rest, I do not look at the person standing next to me, I do nothing but stare a hole in my desired target, and let the bow fire. If you have a clear mind and shoot a relaxed shot from start to finish, this

gives you a foundation to begin analyzing your routine. Last winter, I was practicing and started to notice that had several misses left. I am a right-handed shooter with a wider than normal stance. So, I started to pay attention to every detail about the shots I was making. I found that my stance was too open. When my shot ran too long, the tension in my torso induced by having a more than normally open stance was causing my bow to fire when my pin would move left off of the dot, realigning my shot to its normal position.

There are couple of different target faces that are shot for indoor tournaments. There is the 5 spot target shot in Louisville, Kentucky. This is a marathon. Sixty shots, each shot worth a possible 5 points with an x-ring in the middle of each spot. Perfect score is a 300-60x. There is also the 3 spot "Vegas" target. This target is used in Las Vegas, and at the Lancaster Archery Classic. There are actually 2 scoring systems used for this face. In Las Vegas each shot is worth a possible 10 points with an x-ring in the middle. Perfect score is 300-30x for each day of the 3 day competition. Lancaster uses a slightly different method. There is the 10 ring in the middle of the Vegas target face, but the x ring counts as 11 points. A perfect score here would be a 330 for each round of the 2 round event. Lancaster is my favorite style of indoor shooting. Using the 11 ring as a tie breaker seems more productive to me.

With all of this being said, there are many facets to indoor archery. The breadth and width of it could be nearly as deep as 3D. But, if you are like me, and just want to use it as a training aid for 3D, get your equipment, head to the range and become one with shot execution. Learn to time your shots. Learn to know how hard to pull against the wall. Learn to set your feet the same way every time. Learn to draw your bow the same way every time. Most importantly, do not get frustrated when you miss. Use this as an opportunity to elevate your game. In the end, you will be thankful you did.



# A Buck FOR CARALYNE

BY BRIAN MONTGOMERY

**W**hat is your proudest moment? Was it when you harvested that buck of a lifetime, first deer, or when your children were born? We all can look to times in our past when we were swelled up like a struttin gobbler in spring! Those are the times that drive our passion, whatever that passion might be. I can say I've had some great experiences that I'm proud of, but one of the top occurred over Thanksgiving

weekend this year when my oldest daughter Caralyne, harvested her first deer with a compound bow. There's just something satisfying when you can pass down something your passionate about to your children and they are successful at it.

All my children (Carelyne 13, Walker 11, Bennett 8, & Sarah 6) shoot bows. When we show up at 3D archery tournaments I know other competitors are saying "here comes

the circus"! Anyone with kids can surely relate to trying to corral all those kids at an archery tournament, but that's a great time for us to spend time together. I know there are times when they don't want to go deal with the heat and ticks but they usually do and we always have fun. Up to this point all my kids except Sarah have harvested deer and turkey, Sarah is up next year on a deer and the next spring for turkey. I want them to want it and



to be successful on their own, win or lose, they will do it on their own.

Caralyne has harvested lots of animals with firearms and crossbow but this year she and I wanted her to give it a try with a compound bow. I have a lease in Kansas with Timmy Renfroe, lifelong hunting buddy and we agreed to get tags for our kids this year. Everyone who hunts in Mississippi knows the difference in the challenge from here to there. The

animals are not as pressured and are much more visible. All year I had been preparing Caralyne for our hunt by encouraging her to shoot and talking about how much fun it would be. She had a glimpse of that from the previous Thanksgiving week when she sat with me and saw a great buck that I wouldn't let her shoot because she didn't have a tag. I later killed the same buck and that only put gas on her fire! She practiced throughout the summer and fall getting ready for bow season. We went several times in Mississippi and she even got a shot at a doe but just couldn't connect. She actually missed a doe twice. She told me "the first shot I was so excited I couldn't be still but the second shot I was calm, (hit a vine). She was devastated! I encouraged her and told her if it was easy, everyone would do it. We hunted several more times without a shot opportunity, but Thanksgiving was coming and I knew I could get her a good shot there.

All the kids took out of school Friday before Thanksgiving and we would drive up and be ready to start hunting on Saturday. The plan was for Walker to hunt with a crossbow and Caralyne with compound. Courtney, my wife would hunt with Walker and one of the younger kids and I would hunt with Caralyne and a younger kid. We would switch around the little ones as the week progressed but I had to be with her for her first deer with a bow. I had ground blinds up so we could all pile in and enjoy the show.

Saturday morning found us set up in our blinds an hour before light, Courtney, Walker, & Sarah in one blind and Caralyne, Bennett, and me in another blind 250 yards down. That

morning was cold and really windy. The wind made it easy to get to our sets without spooking any deer. As we set in the darkness, I could only imagine the thoughts going through the kids minds. They have all been in the woods since they were born but with the wind whipping and in a place they had never been, I bet imaginations ran wild anticipating what the morning light would bring. Setting there, I heard a stick break and look and just a couple of yards outside the blind I see a black blob. I raise my binos and see it's a small buck. I showed Bennett and Caralyne and we all strained our eyes to see him but there he was and then he was gone. After good daylight we started seeing deer filter through, another small 7 point buck came in and she decided not to shoot. Still pretty early, around 7:45 I look up and see a doe coming up the hill, she made here way toward our blind, then I see antlers coming up the hill. It was an old warrior 8 point that I had lots of pictures of. He was one of the top ones I wanted one of the kids to kill. With an old grey face and stout body he swaggered in following that doe like a teenager at their first prom dance. As he approached Caralyne's breathing got deep and fast. I whispered, "settle down, I need you to be calm down, focus on the shot". The buck came to 15 yards and just faced our blind as if he was starring through it. Finally he started to go again to our left when I told her to draw, she did and fast, the buck was about to go behind some brush and I grunted softly and he didn't hear it but Caralyne did, she let it fly! The buck jumped and looked around, not missing a hair! He didn't

really know what had happened and he went on to the south. I immediately text Courtney that a shooter buck was headed that way, not long after that we got a text that ol' Grey Face was dead! It was an unbelievable experience for my new ace guide Courtney to experience with Walker and Sarah, all by themselves, that's another story for a future article (awesome crossbow kill)! Meanwhile, Caralyne was again down, happy for her brother but still down. She struggled to be happy for him and put on a smile while the whole family assisted in the recovery but I could tell she was having a hard time with it. We are all highly competitive, doesn't mean we aren't on one another team, but we like to win. I had to explain to Caralyne in our subsequent sits that there is no competing in hunting between

hunters. There's no level playing field like competitive sports with rules and leagues to make it a true competitive sport. When one hunter is successful that doesn't mean you lose! The sport of hunting is about that excitement and learning to funnel that excitement and not let it define you. We had a few good talks about it, the kind of talks I wish someone would have had with me as a young bowhunter.

We hunted the next couple of sits and had several small buck come in and she passed on her own. I always asked, do you want to shoot that one, and she would sarcastically say "no". The reality was that it wasn't bigger than her brothers, COMPETITIVE STILL!

Sunday afternoon the wind shifted from the south and I planned to go to one of my best spots. I knew it was a

place we "should" see a shooter. We were settled in the blind for about an hour when Caralyne said, "I hear something". I jokingly said "tweety birds". She said, "no I'm serious, it's a deer". We looked out the back of the blind and there he was, a nice buck walking directly behind us down a small ditch. As he walked to the west, we looked and coming from the west headed east was another buck and they were on a collision course. As they passed, they both fuzzed up and swaggerd past without a physical confrontation. As if to say, I'm tired of fighting, aren't you! We were happy we had seen them and went back to watching out the front of the blind. About 15 minutes later I saw a body out 100 yards in the trees. Just about 5 minutes later, a doe popped out from the creek drain, as she





walked broadside at 25 yards I hear antlers clanking against branches. I told Caralyne to get ready a buck is coming. Almost instantly we saw the buck, he came from the same trail as the doe and walked up but he peeled off the does trail. Made his way to our left where he stood facing us at 15 yards. I asked Caralyne, you want to shoot him? All sarcasm was gone from her voice, "yes". I told her, he's going to turn back toward the doe and when he does draw you bow. He stood there for what seemed like an eternity. Finally, he started walking and like clockwork she drew, smoothly and quickly. As the buck walked I softly grunted with my voice. He stopped slightly quartering away. I said "there's your shot" and like a script in a movie pulled off perfectly, the arrow was gone and landed perfectly.

The 40 pound Hoyt compound bow sending the carbon arrow tipped with a 100 grain Ramcat broadhead had buried in the bucks chest and he was gone. As he ran away, I saw the arrow break off but I knew it was perfect! We celebrated, hugged and I must admit, I cried like a baby. At that moment I could tell she knew how important this was to me. It may never be that important to her or any of my children, but it was to me and she knew it. She was very happy too to finally experience success and make a clean ethical shot. We called everyone and shared the news. The rest of the family came out to assist in the recovery. It was an unbelievable evening spent with my whole family in the woods, nothing could be better.

Sitting here, typing the story, I struggle to communicate how proud I

am of Caralyne, and my whole family who choose to join me in the passion that I love. I've always, since my kids were born, been intentional to include them, girls and boys. My logic was that you don't have to be a boy to enjoy this, and I want them with me, not the neighbors, not their friends, or other places, not there's anything wrong with that, I just want them with me for as long as I can make it happen. I can tell you all the investment in time I've spent with them paid off for me with Caralyne's buck! I hope reading this story encourages you to take yours starting at an early age, that time spent will reap big returns!

## Girls Rock!

# *The* ASPIRIN BUSTER'S BY FRANK ADDINGTON *Protégés*



There is something about the flight of an arrow. Once archery hooks you it's a sport you will enjoy the rest of your life. As my friend Ted Nugent calls it, "the mystical flight of an arrow."

My father took me into our backyard at the age of 4. He gave me a Bear recurve and some cedar arrows. I was hooked after that first shot! My parents offered me the chance to experience the outdoors in ways not offered to many. They took me camping, fishing, hiking, and bowhunting with their families. I grew up drug free and during my teenage years my experimentation was never drugs but "will this fly catch that trout". You can't beat making family memories outdoors around a campfire.

My parents own and operate Addington's Bowhunter Shop and I grew up around the archery business and many legends of the sport. Fred Bear and Ann Hoyt were family friends. Tom Jennings was at our home when I was a kid. My parents have hunted together most of their 56 year marriage and my mom took her 20th bear at age 72! Ted Nugent was in the camp with them and helped celebrate this feat! It was fun getting to know these and other archery legends. I knew in my heart I would be active in the sport and someday make a living with my bow. Reverend Stacy Groscup was a huge influence on me and when I turned 18 I became his protégé. It never crossed my mind at that time; I would have two protégés of my own.

When my wife and I had our first son, Gus, I couldn't wait to teach him how to shoot a bow. He attended all my shows as a baby and toddler. I started teaching him how to shoot when he was 18 months old and by the time he was four, he was a very good shooter. At the age of five he was performing with me at my shows and hosting interviews too. He would pop balloons and shoot a clothespin from the net. He hit every single target first shot. He was a natural. He signed a lot

of autographs at his first show.

He has since outgrown that first bow and has had a few more bows since then. He still performs with me from time to time and is a huge hit when he does. His grandpa and I spent many hours with him on the indoor range. It is a family affair.

You may ask what you can do in your area to promote archery. There are many things. Host a simple exhibition shoot such as popping balloons or shooting a lifesaver on a string for a 4-H, scout, or church youth group. You don't have to do anything fancy, just explain the basic safety rules, how much fun archery is

and how they can get started. From what I understand, the Mississippi Bowhunters Association is already involved in such activities and would be a great place to start. Reach out to this group and see what you can do to help.

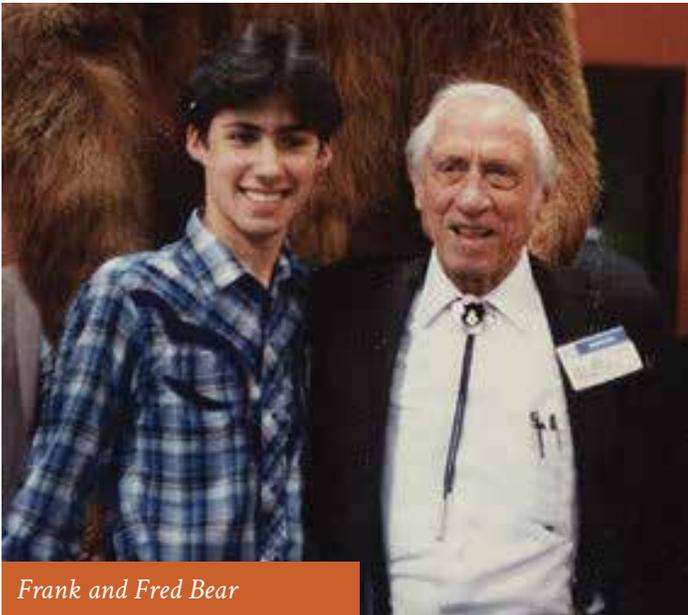
This winter I will be teaching our youngest son Luke to shoot a bow. I think he too will be a natural. It's wonderful to have three generations of archers in our family. It is truly a lifetime, family sport.

Truth be told, I am prouder of the shows Gus performs than my own. I remember when he told me, "I shoot better than you, I'm cuter and the

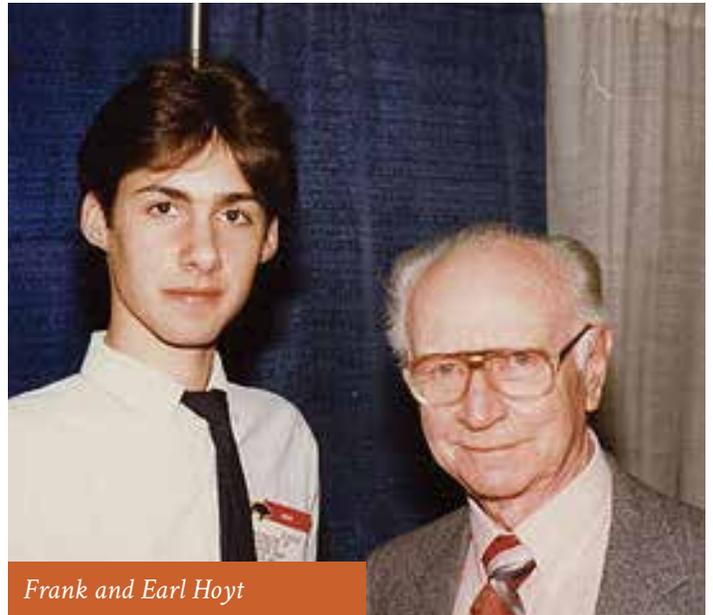
girls like me better...". Indeed son, indeed. I am a proud dad. I can't wait to see Luke and Gus on stage together someday.

It may have started with my parents, but the light lit inside my soul for archery has been passed to my sons (my protégés) and hopefully, will be passed on for many years to come.

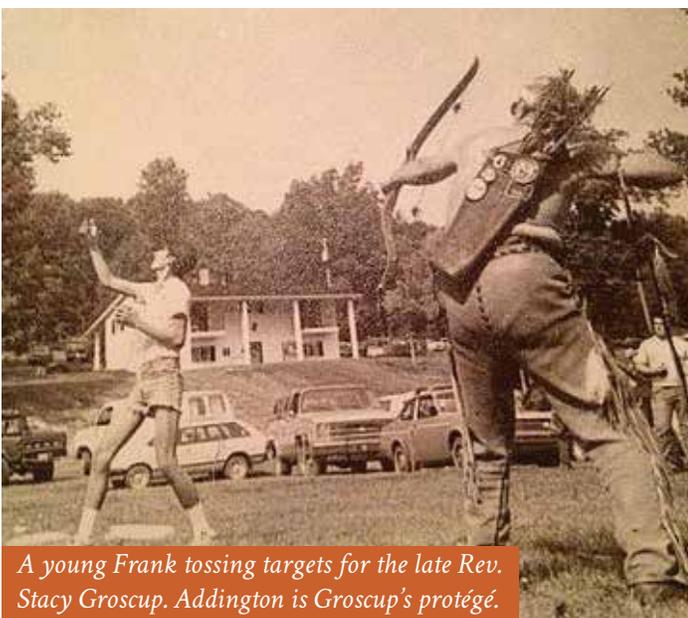
God has blessed me with 20/8 vision and I always give Him credit for any talent I have. Rumor has it I shoot a baby aspirin from mid-air with my Hoyt recurve bow from behind my back...seeing is believing! I hope to see you at a show soon! For more information visit [www.frankaddingtonjr.com](http://www.frankaddingtonjr.com).



*Frank and Fred Bear*



*Frank and Earl Hoyt*



*A young Frank tossing targets for the late Rev. Stacy Groscup. Addington is Groscup's protégé.*



*Frank and oldest son, Gus*



**M**any of us bowhunters have our own patches of private ground where we pursue whitetail. Whether it's a big lease, a hunting club, a family farm, or a smaller parcel of urban woodlot, we have our core hunting area. One option that is often underutilized by archers is Mississippi's public land offerings. As bowhunters we have some great opportunities to hunt new grounds in different areas of the state that we may not hunt otherwise. These areas can also be used as a mid-season getaway when you don't want to over hunt your typical hunting area.

Currently the state of Mississippi has roughly 1.9 million acres of huntable public lands. That is 6% of the total landmass of Mississippi that everyone of us has the opportunity to hunt. This land is comprised of National Forests, National Wildlife Reserves, Corps of Engineers land, and state managed Wildlife Management Areas. According to the latest Mississippi Department of Wildlife hunter survey, only 11.3% of licensed Mississippi hunters took advantage of our public land offerings during the 2016-2017 season. According to the same survey only 42% of hunters

participated in archery hunting.

### **Wildlife Management Areas**

The Mississippi Department of Wildlife currently manages 54 Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs) which cover 665,000 acres. Out of these 54 WMAs, 48 of them allow some form of archery season for whitetail deer for general hunters. Of the remaining six WMAs, three of those offer youth or handicap archery hunting opportunities. WMAs are under year round management for various game animals. This means that there are seasonal burns, planted



food plots, timber and field flooding, and timber thinning for the benefit of the wildlife that lives on the WMA. WMAs are ever changing, so season to season scouting can be necessary to be successful. These WMAs are managed differently than National Forests or private land. Some may have areas off limits to deer hunting, some may have areas with weapon restrictions, and some may be flooded depending on river levels. They may also have different bag limits, season dates, or antler regulations. Make sure to read the rules for the WMA you plan to hunt prior to hunting it to make sure

you are up to speed on the rules and regulations.

Some of the WMAs offer draw hunts for archery. This is a great option for those that want to hunt a specific part of the season in one of the WMAs with limited pressure from other hunters. Interested parties can apply for up to three different WMA draws, with several date options for their desired hunts. The applicant can also add another hunter to their application in case they have someone with whom they would like to share the hunt. These draw hunts are in some of the more desired WMAs in the state and offer great opportunities at a trophy whitetail. Some of them also offer special buck tags made to target a certain number of bucks with at least one unforked antler to aid in deer research and herd management on the WMA.

Another option that archery hunters have is a late season archery only WMA hunt. Several of the WMAs go back to archery only toward the end of season, usually for the month of January. Some WMAs that are draw only at the beginning of the season are open to the general public at the end of the season for archery hunting. This is my personal favorite hunting opportunity that our WMAs have to offer. I have hunted a specific WMA for the entire last two weeks of season and seen less hunters in those two weeks than I did on the opening day of archery season. Typically after the hunting pressure on the area subsides, deer tend to be more at ease. These hunts are also after the rut so bucks are more worried about feeding and recovering from the rut. They will more readily utilize food plots and be

less cautious than most other times of the year.

## **National Wildlife Refuges**

Mississippi hunters have opportunities to hunt several National Wildlife Refuges (NWRs). These NWRs typically have different season structures than the other land in their area. All of the NWRs in Mississippi offer archery only hunts, with some of them being archery only for the majority of the season. Another difference with the NWRs is that they typically limit motorized vehicle traffic. This makes hunting the NWRs a little more difficult, but also leads to less pressure from other hunters. Just like the state managed WMAs, the federally managed NWRs have their own set of season dates, weapon regulations, and permitting processes. Make sure to know the rules as you plan your hunt.

The Theodore Roosevelt Complex is a series of NWRs in the delta region. This complex is comprised of roughly 100,000 acres of huntable land split between Hillside, Holt Collier, Mathews Brake, Morgan Brake, Panther Swamp, and Yazoo National Wildlife Refuges. These NWRs are in the heart of the delta, which is also one of the most desirable whitetail hunting destinations in the state of Mississippi. These NWRs are archery only for whitetail except for a few small draw hunts for youth gun and primitive weapon. These NWRs are some of the hottest public land spots in Mississippi so they may be a little crowded. If you take the time to do some scouting and don't mind walking, there are some true public land monsters to be had in the Theodore Roosevelt Complex.

The North Mississippi Refuges

Complex is made up of Coldwater, Dahomey, and Tallahatchie NWRs. They offer over 15,800 acres of public land. This complex is located in the northern end of the Mississippi delta north of Highway 82 and West of I-55. These NWRs do offer gun and primitive weapon hunts but there are archery only seasons that coincide with the state season dates as well.

Noxubee Wildlife Refuge is located in the north east portion of the state. It is a very large piece of ground at 42,500 acres. The Noxubee NWR offers archery hunting during the state's archery season.

Saint Catherine's Creek NWR is the only NWR in the Lower Mississippi River Refuge Complex that is located in Mississippi. It is located just south of Natchez in an area of the state that has long been known to produce trophy whitetail. It is roughly 24,000 acres of huntable land. It does have some dates set aside for primitive weapon and

youth gun hunts. The remainder of the season is archery only.

Those hunters in the southern portion of the state have some opportunities at hunting a National Wildlife Refuge close to home. Bogue Chitto NWR is located on the Pearl River in both Mississippi and Louisiana. Grand Bay NWR is located in Jackson County and also in parts of Alabama. Both of these NWRs offer archery hunts that follow the state season dates.

### **National Forests**

When someone mentions public land hunting most people immediately think of our National Forests. That is for good reason too. Mississippi has over 1.1 million acres of National Forest lands available to hunt. No matter what region you happen to live in, there's likely a National Forest nearby. Our National Forests are typically open to any legal methods

of hunting under the same rules and regulations set forth by the Department of Wildlife for the area. National Forest land is probably the most utilized public hunting resource we have. It is also the largest so there is still ample opportunity to get away and have a hunt without the fear of running into another hunter.

Those hunters in the northeast zone can enjoy 156,000 acres in Holly Springs National Forest. The Delta zone has 61,000 acres in Delta National Forest. The East Central zone has 67,000 acres in the Tombigbee National Forest and 180,000 acres in Bienville National Forest. Homochitto National Forest offers 192,000 acres to hunters in the Southwest zone. Finally, you can find Mississippi's largest national forest, Desoto National Forest, with a whopping 518,000 acres entirely within the Southeast zone.

As you can see, there is a lot of National Forest acreage open to the general public for all recreational opportunities. Mississippi archery hunters have ample National Forest land to scout and find a new hunting spot. Some of these National Forests contain some of Mississippi's finest hardwood bottoms, which make for some great early season hunts when the acorns start to fall.

### **Corps of Engineers Land**

The United States Corps of Engineers owns a good bit of land in Mississippi. Most of it is huntable as well. The areas around the Tennessee Tombigbee Waterway are almost exclusively managed as Wildlife Management Areas by the state. The areas around Enid Lake, Sardis Lake, Grenada Lake, and Arkabutla Lake are managed under state rules similar to





WMAs. These areas are great for the hunter not afraid to take advantage of the water to transport them to and from their hunting area.

These areas are typically only accessible by foot or boat. They usually follow the state seasons, bag limits, and weapon restrictions. However in some cases there is a variation. Some Corps of Engineers land, like the land around Sardis Lake, has state WMAs mixed in. Be sure to check the regulations and know the property boundaries before hunting on Corps of Engineers land.

### **Early and Late Season Hunts**

Mississippi has several deer hunting zones. Different zones have different season beginning and end dates. Those hunters that live in the southeast zone can enjoy the same season start date as

the rest of the hunters in the state by taking advantage of one of the public land opportunities mentioned in this article. There are a lot of places that a southeast zone resident could make an early season hunt within a reasonable driving distance of home.

Those of us who live in any of the other zones have the same option. When our season concludes at the end of January, we can drive south and extend our season by two weeks. Desoto National Forest offers plenty of open public land. Bogue Chitto and Grand Bay NWRs offer public land hunting in the southeast zone as well. Lastly, Marion County WMA is archery only from January 4 through the end of the season on February 15th.

### **Conclusion**

Mississippi has many public land opportunities for whitetails. Whether it's a white oak that's dropping acorns in the early season, a late season food plot on a WMA, or a mid season change of scenery you are looking for, Mississippi hunters have public land options for all of the above. Our federal and state lands are here for your enjoyment. With a little time, preparation, and scouting you may find your next honey hole on a piece of nearby public ground.



**About the author:** JOSH WATTS is a board member of the Southeast Chapter of Backcountry Hunters and Anglers, a nonprofit group that acts as a voice for our public lands. He is a lifetime Mississippi resident that loves to enjoy the opportunities that the state's public woods and waters have to offer.

# THE MEASURE OF A MEMORY

## HUNTERS FOR MISSISSIPPI CHILDREN

STORY BY BLAKE REECE

PHOTOS BY MICHAEL BERRY, HFMC DIRECTOR



*“Dreams come true, just keep praying and working on what you want to achieve and ask God to lead the way. I have been praying that I could do this.”*

– JEANTHONY ROME

Looking back over a lifetime of hunting I can't help but smile as I relive some of the more memorable moments I have encountered, if only in my mind. Though I have been blessed with many great memories on my journey as a hunter, many of my fondest memories are from early childhood experiences in the outdoors. Those memories helped shape me into the man I am today and I will always hold them close to my heart. Maybe you can relate.

I think back to my first kill, a doe. And it wasn't just a doe; it was an accomplishment like no other at that time. It was redemption from the one I had missed two days prior. I was the happiest little boy on the planet that day, and the afternoon was filled with high-fives around our camp ground and being accepted as one of the guys. I listened to the old men tell their stories of their early kills. It was a great day.

I am forever grateful to those that have selflessly taken the time to let me tag along as a youngster, teaching me the ways of the outdoors, guiding me to a successful harvest, showing me that hard work along with patience and persistence will pay off. These people, my father, uncle, and friends taught me about respect, about leaving a place better than you found it, and were prime examples

of passing along our hunting heritage to those who will soon follow in our footsteps. The measure of a man is the legacy he leaves behind; what he does for those who can never pay him back. That's what this sport of hunting is all about.

Now I am the age of those who passed this tradition on to me and I am inspired by those who stand beside me, who are taking the initiative to teach others and share these great experiences with the younger generation. Hunters for Mississippi Children, Inc. (HFMC), a non-profit organization, was created for the sole purpose of introducing children to the outdoors with a focus on, but not limited to, single parent families, children with disabilities, and other children that may not normally have the means to participate in the outdoor activities that we so often take for granted. HFMC focuses on activities to include as a primary point of interest; hunting, fishing, and camping adventures.

HFMC was established by ten close friends whose aim is simply to pass on the tradition of hunting to the less fortunate. And as of November they have already made many memories that will last a lifetime with stories of successes and failures, laughs and high fives, and an occasional tear or two of the simple joy from seeing the excitement on a young hunter's face.

Jeanthony Rome, pictured above, from Cleveland, MS. had never been hunting and stated that the opportunity to do so would be a dream come true. That's all longtime friend and outdoorsman Michael Berry needed to hear to make it a priority to get this young man into the woods.

## HUNTERS FOR MISSISSIPPI CHILDREN

**Hunters For Mississippi Children Inc.** is a nonprofit organized exclusively for charitable, and educational purposes within the meaning of Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. EIN#82-2481962.

**What We Do:** HFMC has been established for the sole purpose of introducing children to the outdoors. With a focus on single parent families, children with disabilities, and other children that may not normally have the means to participate in outdoor activities. HFMC focuses on activities to include as a primary point of interest; hunting, fishing, and camping adventures.

**Contact:** Please check out our Facebook Page! We are continuously posting opportunities for children to participate. We also love to share the outcomes of all activities involved with the HFMC outdoor events. With any questions, please feel free to contact Michael Berry (601)927-9355 or michaelberry44@hotmail.com

**Who We Are:** The idea of giving back to the children across the state of Mississippi was brought up in a group discussion one night as a few fellow hunters asked if there was anyone that offered hunting trips for children that would not normally have the means to experience a successful hunt. We all discussed the bigger organizations that take groups of kid's deer hunting one time a year, but we were hungry for more. We started tossing up ideas for deer, duck, and turkey hunting, fishing, camping, and any other activities that we could get kids involved with.

This is something that I personally have wanted to do for a long time. I sat my son Huntley Berry age 7 down to discuss this opportunity. If you know Huntley, he is a kind-hearted deer killing machine! I asked him how he felt about letting other kids experience what he has experienced since age 4 when he first started killing deer. His eyes lit up with joy and he carried on about how we could help others for hours. From that point on, we haven't looked back yet.

HFMC was established by ten close friends and hunters that have remained focused on bringing the outdoors into the lives of less fortunate children. As we worked to establish this organization, we have also brought our kids into the view of what it means to give back. The families involved with this organization are driven to remain focused on our mission and vision and plan to thrive with success for others.

**Mission:** To search and find those in need of welcoming the outdoors into the lives of Mississippi children.

**Vision:** May the memory last a lifetime for all that are involved.





It would be an experience Jeanthony will never forget. On November 21<sup>st</sup>, Michael made a trip to pick up Jeanthony and they headed out to make preparations for his first deer hunt in hopes of it being a successful one. Within a mere ten rounds Jeanthony proved his marksmanship abilities were on par with the task at hand and he was ready to hunt! That afternoon Jeanthony got to see several scrapes, rubs, and an abundance of deer sign keeping his anticipation high, and even had a deer snort at them, which was a first as well. As often happens though the afternoon ended with no opportunity at a deer.

However, all hope was not lost.

Michael made a promise to Jeanthony, *“I will promise you one thing; I will be back and we will get you a deer!”* The mission to make this dream come true was underway. On day two HFMC Directors Michael Berry and Hunter Cox, along with Jeanthony made their way to a promising location. It was windy, but they were confident deer had been frequenting this particular food plot often. Suddenly, shortly after 4:00 P.M. a few doe stepped into the food plot and Jeanthony was ready! With excitement at an all-time high, He took careful aim and fired. With the ring of

shot, it was obvious the deer was hit well. Jeanthony had sealed the deal on his first deer!

Michael added: “I am not sure who was shaking more, me, Jeanthony, or Hunter Cox that was with us.”

*“We have built a great relationship with dog owners around the state to help us ensure a clean recovery of all deer shot. As we sat waiting on the dog with our nerves still rattled from the action. Jeanthony continued to thank us and the organization for all that we do. We had a short 75 yard blood trail, and with the help of Taylor Sibley and his great dog Cash, my man had recovered his first deer and the celebration began!*”

*Smiles and high fives were showering down!"*

Jeanthony ended the night with a Facebook post that read like this:

*"Shot my first deer today. I really had fun and I am ready to go for it again. Thank God for allowing me to have positive people in my circle to help a dream come true. I am looking forward to hunting again."*

In a time where the first thing we often do is over analyze the trophies we pursue and size our success by inches of antler score, it is important from time to time to get back to the root of the adventure, and though I can't speak for Jeanthony, I'd bet if you asked him the score of his trophy he would proudly state, "you can't measure of a memory!"

Truth is, you can't put a measure on a memory. You can't put a number on the rush of adrenaline as the moment of truth is presented to you after countless hours of hard work finally culminating into a shot opportunity, nor can you rank a smile in celebration with your best friends after a successful harvest when the emotions of gratitude are expressed to the fullest. You can't put a tape to that.

— · —

To the HFMC organization, I thank you for reminding me what the sport of hunting is all about. I thank you for selflessly investing in others the same way others invested in us. I thank you for doing something bigger than yourselves, and for making strides to leave this place better than you found it. I thank you for allowing others to have the opportunity to encounter God's beauty in His creation as one sits in the stillness of the outdoors.

To Jeanthony, and all the other hunters that have been involved with the HFMC, I thank you for reminding me that it is not about the size of the antlers, nor the number of kills, but rather the size of the memory. You all inspire me to be a better man and a better caretaker and steward of what I have been given. I pray you will continue in your outdoor adventures and continually thank God for each opportunity provided. For as the Bible implies, *we are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes*. Make the most of each opportunity, in the outdoors and in life itself. Always remember to give thanks. For those that have helped you along the way, I ask that you do the same for others so that the torch is passed on in this relay of life for the better of all mankind.

And to all my fellow hunters out there, I hope you have a blessed season. May you as well provide someone with an opportunity they will cherish for a lifetime. Because after all, if not you, then who? It is my hope that as you sit in the calmness of creation, you give



thanks to God above for the blessings you've been given, and know that it is not about the size of the trophy, nor the number obtained, but rather the thrill of excitement and the memories gained!

-Blake Reece

— · —

"..Have the greatest time of your life, keep your radar on high alert, aim small, miss small, be safe and be the best conscientious reasoning predator you can be every day afield. A big thank you to all the volunteers and my friends at the Mississippi division of Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks on this magical Mississippi super hunt! Make every hunt a super hunt! May the Great Spirit be forever at your side. Godspeed!"

-Ted Nugent and Family

— · —

"To all of our supporters and the people that have assisted us with making these kid's dreams come true, Hunters For Mississippi Children would like to thank you for your donations through supportive funds, time, and the availability to hunt farms across the state.

As a nonprofit organization, we strive to provide opportunities for children that may not have the means otherwise. We focus on our participants gaining knowledge through teaching, the opportunity to hunt if drawn during that season, and simply enjoying the great outdoors through fellowship amongst a great team. This organization would not be able to do this without you!"

-Michael Berry

— · —

# A Season of CHANGE

STORY BY KATIE BLAIR  
PHOTOS BY MICHELLE BLAIR



Charles Bukowski once said, "Some moments are nice, some are nicer, and some are even worth writing about." This, is one of those moments.

As hunters, we never forget certain moments, seeing our first deer, shooting our first deer, our first missed shot, and shooting our biggest buck. I was lucky enough to have one of these moments on November 22, 2017.

I had not been hunting in quite some time and when my dad asked me if I wanted to join him and my sister, Hailey, on an afternoon hunt, I couldn't pass up the opportunity. I spent the morning with my mom and my youngest sister, Becca, cleaning house and putting up Christmas decorations. I was starting to get antsy, counting down the minutes until I was able to meet my dad and sister and head off to deer camp. Since it had been a while since my last hunt, I realized that most of my clothes were either too small or my sister had stolen them. With limited options I opted for my dad's pajama pants, a rather tight camo jumpsuit, a Bass Pro Shop hoodie, a very oversized camo jacket, and to top off the look, a beanie with a giant purple puff ball on top. With my gear in tow we headed out to meet my dad. That 25 minute drive to his office felt like a lifetime.

Arriving at my dad's office I notice that they are already packed up and ready to go. I jumped into the truck and thanked my mom for dropping me off. That ride to camp brought back so many of my childhood memories. The sight of the falling leaves outside, my dad driving with the windows down, and my sister and I laughing about past experiences. An hour later and we arrived at deer camp, a place I had not been to in over two years and I could hardly wait to get into a deer stand. As we were unpacking the truck and about to head out, my dad handed me his .30-06 rifle and to my surprise told me I would not be hunting with my trustee 7 mm 08 rifle. I was skeptical of his gun, having never shot it before, but decided it wouldn't hurt to give it a try. We each said our good lucks and good byes and headed off in separate directions. I choose to hunt from the wooden box stand. As I climbed the ladder I took everything in; the chipped wood, the faded camo paint, and the over grown grass near the ladder, to me it was perfect. Once I got settled into the stand I leaned back into my chair and closed my eyes, just listening to everything around me. Being a sophomore in college, I had not had much time to be outdoors and enjoy nature so I wanted to take in as much as I could in that moment. The wind was crisp and swirled

all around me, making me shiver. The leaves behind me rustled. The crows cawed back and forth to one another. I heard ducks landing in the lake behind me. The longer I kept my eyes closed the louder the world seemed. Until suddenly, everything seemed to quiet down. I opened my eyes and scanned the food plots; nothing. The air slowly began to get colder. I felt my phone vibrate and noticed a group message between my dad and sister. Hailey had some deer in her food plot, two spikes and three does, and my dad had seen a couple of does run off. I was excited for them and continued to enjoy the serenity of the outdoors. Then out of the corner of my eye, I saw some movement in one of the food plots.

I slowly turned my head and noticed two deer at the edge of the plot. I reached for my binoculars, trying to catch a better glimpse. Two yearlings had made their way to me and were beginning to enjoy a nice grassy dinner. In past years, I would have been disappointed in seeing the two, however, something changed this year and I just smiled and thanked God for what a wonderful day he had given me thus far. Even with just the two yearlings, my day had been made! I watched the two slowly work their way closer and closer to the stand. I watched their tails flick and their ears twitch. I laughed at their curiosity to a fallen leaf and when they jumped back in surprise when the wind blew it back up into the air. I kept quite so I wouldn't disturb them, although several times I was sure they would run away after looking directly up at me. Over an hour had passed since they had first stepped out onto the food plot and I was still being entertained by them. Suddenly both were deathly still, their ears flicked forward. I followed their gaze, wondering what caused them such concern. Out stepped a young buck, warily at first. I noticed that he only had one antler with two points, and I knew that this must be the deer that my sister referred to as "The Unicorn". I chuckled at his rather odd physique and began to watch how he interacted with the yearlings. They seemed to ignore each other for the most part, with an occasional glance to the others direction, and then returning to eat the grass. I watched as the sun slowly began to set behind the pine trees and the sounds of day began to fade away. The birds stopped chirping and were replaced by the sounds of crickets. The caws of the crows were replaced by the hoots and the screeches of the owls. A moment of sadness passed over me, as I knew it would

soon be time for me to leave and go back home, away from the beauty of this place. I continued to watch the three deer eat and pace back and forth from one side of the food plot to another. In just a few minutes the light of the day would fade into darkness and I knew that my time was almost up. But I was not disappointed, God had given me a beautiful day and I couldn't have enjoyed it more.

I felt another vibration from my phone and decided it wouldn't hurt to check. It was my sister saying she was watching a few deer on the east end of her food plot and would stay with them until it was too dark to see them anymore. I put my phone down and looked back up, hoping to see the three deer I had enjoyed watching still in the food plot. However, upon looking up, I noticed that there were four bodies instead of three. A large deer had entered the food plot and was walking across. I reached for my binoculars to get a better look. It was then I noticed this deer had antlers. Time instantly suddenly slowed down.

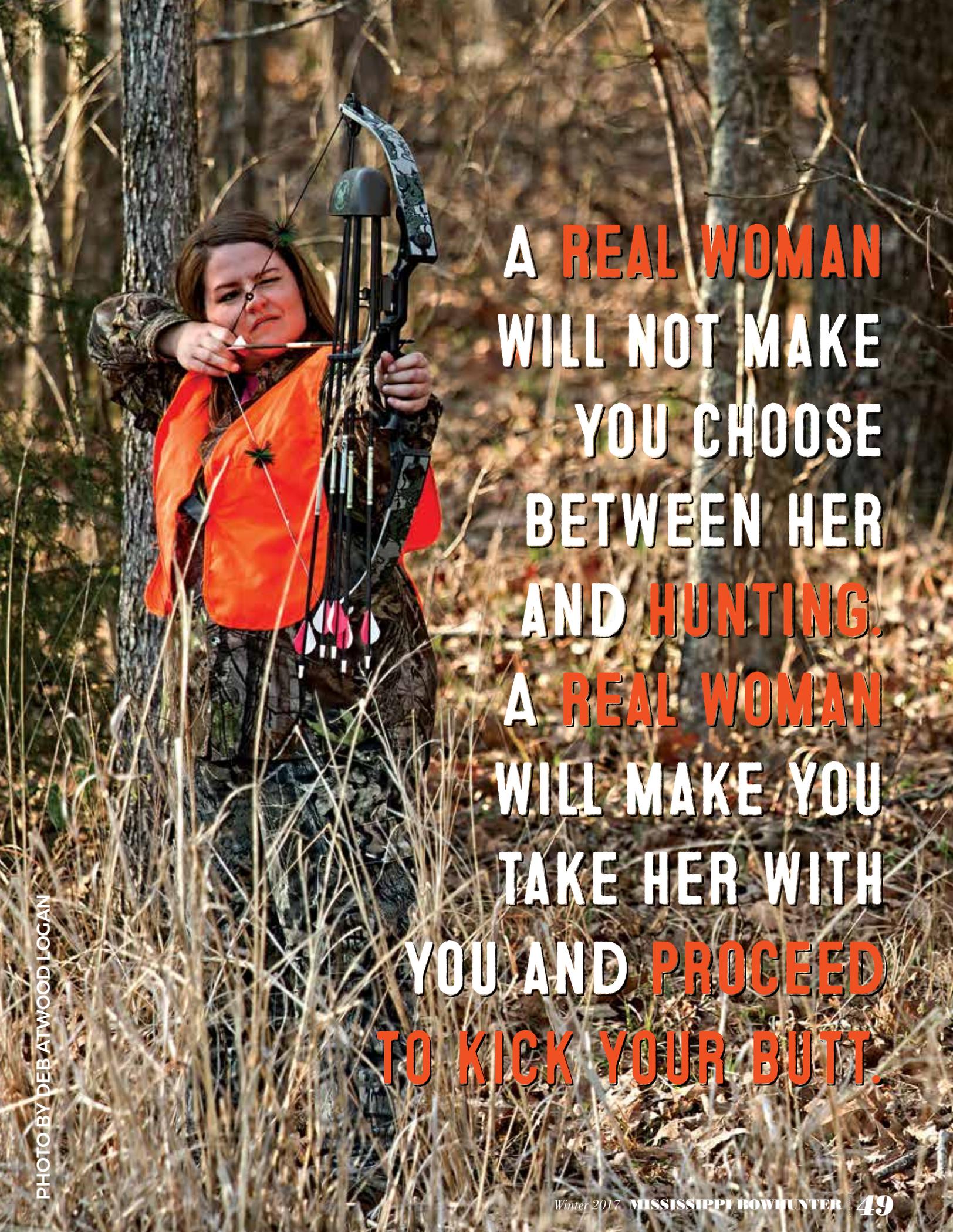
This buck was old and wise and wasn't going to stop to feed. With every step he took I could feel my heartrate

increasing. It pounded like a giant drum in my chest. I knew that to take this deer I was going to have to take aim at a moving target. I reached for my dad's gun and placed it tight into my shoulder. I looked into the scope and set my crosshairs onto his right shoulder and lined my shot ahead of him just behind a small tree located right on the edge of the food plot. I knew I only had moments before this buck would step back into my view and I would have that one and only shot before he would disappear into the woods. I could hear the sound of my own breath leaving my mouth. I knew that I had to take the shot now or risk losing my moment. I pushed off the safety, slowly breathed in and exhaled as he stepped into view I pulled the trigger. BOOM, the sound of the shot echoed through the woods and everything become quiet. I looked up and for a moment saw nothing. Did I hit him? Did I miss? Did he run? The questions of uncertainty were endless. As I locked my eyes onto where I took the shot I saw the deer. He dropped where he stood, kicking twice and then became still. It was then that time returned to its normal speed. I began to notice how bad I was shaking and how fast I was breathing. I could hardly text my dad letting him know that it was me who shot and that I had shot a big buck. I waited anxiously in my stand until dark, giving the deer time to take his last breath in peace and assuring that the deer was dead before I walked up to him. Climbing down from the stand my mind was in a haze. Did I really just harvest a big buck? The walk to him seemed like an eternity but when I finally arrived at his side, I could not be more surprised. Lying in front of me was one of the largest bucks I have ever seen! I could hardly believe it. I came into these woods, not expecting anything, just wanting a day in nature, and here before me was this amazing buck. I ran to my dad in jubilation shouting about how large this buck was and how happy I was to have this experience.

I thanked God for what he had given me and I thanked the deer for the meat he would be providing me and my family. My dad was so proud. He said this was a once in a lifetime buck and he wanted to get me a full shoulder mount to enjoy this buck for years to come. I felt so blessed to have been able to experience this moment and to be able to have these amazing memories with my family. I want to thank my mom and my dad for teaching me to appreciate what God and nature have provided me and showing me what it truly means to be a hunter.



Girls Rock!



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**YOU CHOOSE**  
**BETWEEN HER**  
**AND HUNTING.**  
**A REAL WOMAN**  
**WILL MAKE YOU**  
**TAKE HER WITH**  
**YOU AND PROCEED**  
**TO KICK YOUR BUTT.**

PHOTO BY DEB ATWOOD LOCAN



# Hunt Harvest

# HELP



BY PAUL DAVIS

**L**ike many of us, I can remember the day I harvested my first deer. It wasn't my first attempt at a deer – no, it was more or less the 5th attempt, and I am still reminded of that to this day some 20 years later. I had my fair share of missed opportunities. The first deer I ever shot at was with a single-shot .410, out of a deer stand with a buck standing at 10 yards. I was shaking so bad that there was no way I was going to make a good shot. Bullet went right over his back and my dad fired immediately

afterwards with his Remington Model 700 .280. It took a while for him to admit that I never came close to hitting that buck. A few weeks later my brother and father were determined to get me my first deer so we set out across the bottomland hardwoods, this time I was armed with a Remington Youth Model 7mm-08. All three of us were sitting at the base of a large oak tree when a doe pokes out 20 yards away. I have my gun on my knee ready to fire. Knees knocking and shaking like a leaf, I aim down the

scope...Boom! "Shoot again, Paul"... Boom! "Paul! Shoot again! Shoot!"... Boom! That deer was so frightened by the events that took place by that old oak tree that I am pretty sure she migrated north to the next county shortly thereafter. My redemption came a few days later sitting on a green field, the deer came out so quickly I didn't have time to shake or think about it. Aim then fire and just like that I had just shot the biggest deer that I had ever laid eyes on. As my dad is tracking blood I am following him



step by step picking up each leaf that he looks at inspecting it just to make sure he knows what he is doing. My father then stops and asks me to keep moving forward following the trail. Leaf after leaf the blood trail seems to grow larger when to my surprise I look up and see that my efforts have finally been rewarded and I see the world record buck that I had dreamed about since the day my dad told me I could shoot a deer. Anyone in the world was not happier in that one moment than either one of us as I held the rack of a

nice 8 point, it is a moment that I will never forget.

While my shooting has improved over the years (at times) and my shirts are not littered with notches taken out on the back there are still many lessons to be learned when it comes to chasing whitetails. They seem to be creatures of habit and taking advantage of such can lead to success in the deer woods. I have since switched over to my bow and with it a whole new learning curve. For me, it is not necessarily the deer I have killed or the ones that hang on my wall that stand out but how and why I go about it. The reason I hunt begins with a quick history lesson, back at the turn of the 20th century one of my ancestors was on a river boat and overheard two men talking of a large parcel of land up for sale. My great, great grandfather got off at the next stop, bought a horse and purchased the land before they arrived. This could be an old folktale where facts get cloudier and cloudier as time goes along. Thing is, my grandfather was a wise man true to his word and I am blessed enough to hunt on a piece of property that has been in the family for generations, so I take his word for it. I have made many memories hunting with my grandfather, my father, my brother, and the rest of our family. It seems that my fondest memories are when we were all together at camp sitting around a fire or celebrating success out in the field. I have always been taught to respect the game and to respect the land as it is a resource that we are given by the Good Lord up above.

The term, "resource" took up a whole new meaning to me as I took up Hunter's Harvest (HH) not too long ago. I knew other states in the country had similar programs, every now and then a TV show would

highlight a program and what it took to be involved. A quick research showed that hunters were making a real difference. Take what they have done in Tennessee for example. By the end of the 2016-2017 season the state of Tennessee had provided 5,361,308 meals since 1998. Let me repeat that...5,361,308 meals! That certainly makes the most out of a resource at hand.

A quick search on the internet and you will find that Tennessee has an approximate deer herd of over 900,000 while Mississippi has just over 1.75 million, so why is Mississippi's HH Program behind? Quick answer, Hunter's Harvest is still a young program. Long answer, I would argue that any hunter in Mississippi has at one point in time given venison away in hopes that the person receiving such would either a) take up deer hunting, or b) have a warm and tasty meal to enjoy for days to come. Since Hunter's Harvest is relatively new, not many people know that such a program exists. The program began in 2011 with just 7 processors and one central food bank that picked up the donations. Limited locations saw limited donations, but now the program boasts of 40 Processors with close to 50 food banks and shelters in the state that receive donated venison due to Hunter's Harvest.

It seems simple, Hunt – Harvest – Help. Hunting has been my favorite hobby to date and I have tried them all. Baseball, basketball, football, music, fishing – none of those things could outlast the effects that hunting has had for me. I wait all year for it in hopes for new adventures afield. Harvesting is part of the hunt and something that should not be taken lightly. Taking a life of a deer means having the presence of mind to respect the animal

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can help our communities in need. In fact, as of 2016 over 400,000 families were living below the poverty line which includes just over 100,000 children. These numbers coupled with the estimated amount of deer in Mississippi should pop out to us as hunters. There is room for sportsmen and women to make a difference. Through funding from private donors and large companies in Mississippi, Hunter's Harvest has been able to afford to take any donation at no costs to the hunter. It is easy as going on a hunt and harvesting a deer in hopes to feed a family, in fact one deer can feed over 140 meals. That one deer harvested and donated to a processor through the program can feed multiple families or even one family for one month!

As hunters in Mississippi we can make a real difference. I challenge each fellow bow hunter to help a neighbor in need and Take Aim at Hunger! Donate a deer to a participating processor and get involved. For more information about Hunter's Harvest and how you can be get involved please visit Mississippi Wildlife Federation's website at [www.mswildlife.org/hunters-harvest](http://www.mswildlife.org/hunters-harvest) or email Paul at [pdavis@mswf.org](mailto:pdavis@mswf.org).

and leave minimal waste. Helping is a term that we Mississippians know all too well. We are known for our hospitality and our generous

attitudes towards our neighbors. Hunt - Harvest - Help is the makeup of Hunter's Harvest. Hunters in Mississippi can make a difference, we

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# FIELD TO FORK



If someone declares they do not like “wild game,” I say it’s simply because they have not had it properly prepared. Below is my most popular preparation of wild game and it is equally moist, tender and tasty with venison or wild pork. While several people only think about using the backstrap tenderloin whole for this preparation, many other cuts work fantastic and offer smaller serving portions perfect for just popping into your mouth and enjoying. In home processing, we bone out all of our meat before freezing. Any cut turns heavenly when prepared this way – hindquarter, front shoulder, backstrap, or inner loins.

## *Stuffed Venison or Pork Pockets* a/k/a Bambi Bites, Pork Poppers Shared by MBA member: Rhonda Waits, Vancleave, MS

### INGREDIENTS

- 8 oz cream cheese (softened)
- 1 tsp Worcestershire sauce
- 1 tsp McCormick’s roasted herb and garlic seasoning
- Thin bacon (buy the economical, paper thin sliced bacon – it stretches more easily)
- Pickled jalapenos
- Back strap tenderloin, inner loins, any “steak” style cuts that you can score and fold over or slice a “pocket” in
- Dale’s steak seasoning (reduced sodium)

### DIRECTIONS

1. Blend softened cream cheese, Worcestershire and roasted herb and garlic seasoning;
2. Lightly rub venison with Dale’s Steak seasoning.
3. Slice pockets in thicker cuts or score steak cuts so the meat will fold in half (like a fold over sandwich).
4. Lay flat. Spread with seasoned cream cheese.
5. Top with a slice of pickled jalapeño and fold meat pocket closed.
6. Wrap and stretch bacon around meat. (Using this method, there is no need to toothpick it together.)
7. Place bacon wrapped bundles on wire rack nestled on a cookie sheet lined with tin foil (for easy clean up) in 350 degree oven for 30 minutes. Bacon will be browned, turn and cook additional 20 minutes for other side to brown and meat to cook thoroughly. The wire rack lets the bacon grease drain to the cookie sheet. If you do not have a wire rack, turn another pan bottom side up on a cookie sheet, cover both with foil and the grease will run off the meat on the elevated pan to the cookie sheet as well.





# TARGET PANIC

BY RANDY ULMER

## DEFINITION

Target panic is a crippling condition that affects many novice, as well as experienced, archers. It can strike any archer at any time. Some people say 90% of all archers will experience some form of target panic during their shooting careers. Depending on the definition of Target Panic you use, I suspect the number is higher. Because Target Panic has never been clinically studied, we aren't sure what causes it-or even what it truly is. All of the available literature on the subject is anecdotal at best. Because there are no scientific studies, everything we think we know about this condition is based upon people's opinions and experiences -and a whole lot of speculation. I would venture to say that more people leave archery

due to this syndrome than for any other reason. It is important for us as bowhunters to understand that such a condition exists, so that even if we have no current symptoms, we can minimize the chances of eventually coming down with a clinical case of the syndrome. If you have never experienced target panic, you may be getting fairly disinterested in this article about now. Please continue to read! Fortunately, you can 'vaccinate' yourself against target panic-and the prevention is closely related to the 'cure'.

Some of the generally agreed upon signs and symptoms of target panic are: The inability to place the sight in the center of the target. 'Freezing' above or below the target (usually below). The inability to release the

arrow at all. Punching the trigger (inability to execute a surprise release-inability to squeeze the trigger). Moving the sight through the target and punching the trigger as the sight goes by the center ('drive-by-shooting'). Prematurely releasing the arrow before the sight is on the target center, or at least a very strong desire to do so. Loss of composure. Loss of confidence. Jerking the bow just before shooting. 'Double clutching' the bow. (the shooter's body acts as if the shot was fired before it actually is fired). Shooting with just a few seconds left on the shot clock (tournament archers). Last, but most importantly for us bowhunters is 'buck fever' - the overwhelming flood of emotion that sometimes occurs when shooting at game.

When most people get to the point that target panic begins to seriously affect their shooting, they are often unsure what is happening. They may remain in denial for an extended period of time. They may be embarrassed about the condition and try to struggle through it without seeking help. It often becomes debilitating before they seek help (or quit archery altogether). Education is essential! Starting archers out correctly with proper physical (form) and mental training will minimize the likelihood of them ever developing the condition.

Most remedies for target panic are simply methods for breaking down one's shot process and building it over again. In my opinion the best prevention for target panic is to build the shot process correctly in the first place and at the same time, instill the discipline to maintain it. Target panic is like cancer- prevention and early detection are our best tools to fight it!

Before I get into my personal thoughts and opinions on the subject of Target Panic, let me begin with a disclaimer: I am not a psychologist; sports or otherwise. I do not have any specific expertise in this area. However, I have been shooting archery for over 50 years and have found myself in just about every high pressure situation an archer can be placed into, from drawing back on monster bucks to one-arrow shoot offs for professional world championships. I do have strong opinions on the matter. However, it's important to remember that just because my opinions are strong, doesn't mean they are right!

\*

I believe in each of us there is an anxiety that surrounds and

permeates the shot process. This anxiety is especially pronounced in the moments before and during the release. Typically, the more important the outcome of the shot, the higher the level of anxiety. This anxiety continuum ranges from mild to severe. Some archers are always able to keep it under control. Others can not. With full-blown, clinical target panic, this anxiety affects the mind in a particular way that 'short circuits' the shot process at a critical juncture.

The general consensus among most 'experts' is that target panic is something you either have or you don't have-kind of like being pregnant-you either are or you aren't. I disagree. I believe that target panic is a name we give to a particular outward manifestation of a much larger and more complex psychological issue. This issue is the general anxiety that we all have surrounding the shot process. The bottom line is that the worse this anxiety (Target Panic) is, the more likely it is to prevent you from being the best shooter you can be.

On a side note: I would love to see the term Target Panic eliminated from the vernacular. Because the term itself may contribute to the syndrome. When one is labeled as having target panic, it is much like being told you are HIV positive-you will probably begin to feel sick immediately. All of your day-to-day aches, pains and sniffles will be connected in your mind to the virus. As archers, we all have a continuous flow of self-doubts, feelings of inadequacy and lack of confidence when we shoot. If we have been labeled as having Target Panic, these normal day-to-day issues will be placed at the feet of our Target Panic. The label itself becomes somewhat of a self-fulfilling prophecy. (Even with

that being said, I am going to continue to use the term in this article for convenience and continuity.)

## CAUSES

It would be wonderful if we truly understood what causes Target Panic. Unfortunately, we don't. As I mentioned earlier, there are no scientific studies available, so we are forced to speculate. Our best guess is that Target Panic is what psychologists call a 'conditioned response'. You are conditioned by one set of stimuli to respond in a certain way- kind of like Pavlov's dogs. Or it may be a deep-rooted 'motivational conflict'. Fortunately, we don't have room here to go over these theories. There are probably as many reasons an archer experiences anxiety during the shot as there are archers. We do not know why some people's anxieties escalate to full blown clinical Target Panic and others do not. It may arise from being overly concerned with the outcome of the shot or from trying to control the exact timing of the shot rather than focusing on form and execution.

Some have speculated that there may be equipment factors contributing to the condition. Actually, a couple of equipment issues may contribute to Target Panic. The first is holding too much weight at full draw. This isn't an issue for most compound shooters now because of the high let-off of today's bows. The second is the index finger release aid. I do believe that the use of the index finger to trigger the shot somehow facilitates the likelihood of 'punching' the trigger along with other problems attributed to Target Panic.

The bottom line is that we don't have to fully understand the etiology (what causes it) of the 'disease' to treat it successfully. The etiology of Target Panic is very complex and probably



PHOTO BY RANDY ULMER

different for each individual. The treatment would probably be more efficient if we fully understood the cause. Again, we don't understand it, so in the next issue of Mississippi Bowhunter Magazine we will focus on the prevention and the treatment instead!

## PREVENTION AND TREATMENT

You may hear of many quick-fixes reputed to 'cure' target panic. Unfortunately they seldom, if ever, work. There have also been many gadgets designed and marketed to 'fix' Target Panic. Many bowhunters

spend a great deal of money and time on these. To the best of my knowledge none are effective as a long term solution. Many of these ideas or devices will work for a short period of time until your subconscious becomes familiar with the new routine and recognizes and overcomes the 'trick'.

I am going to outline a treatment protocol for Target Panic. This regimen will not be easy! It will be very long, boring and time-consuming. You must be fully committed to the cure for it to be successful. Unfortunately, even after you have completed the regimen, you will need

to continue practicing preventative measures to avoid a relapse. The reason so many people struggle and fail to manage Target Panic is that they don't fully commit to the treatment protocol. It is not easy. However, the great thing about working on this condition is that the treatment program will make you a much better over-all archer in the long run.

Another Disclaimer: this is only a quasi-scientifically based treatment protocol. It is loosely based on the principle of systematic desensitization. We will try to establish different associations during the shot process.

While working through this protocol you will slowly 'unlearn' undesirable behaviors and replace them with different more desirable behaviors.

I'm going to borrow a page from the AA 12 step program here: The first step to curing Target Panic it is to admit that you have the problem and also that you have no control over it. I mean this! Once you have come to this realization and are willing to admit it (at least to yourself), you can proceed with the full treatment protocol.

It is best to wait until the off season to begin the program so you will have plenty of time before the hunting season (or the tournament season) to fully adapt.

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Photo by Kye Clearman



# JACKPOT!

BY VIRGIL MURRAY  
PHOTOS BY TRAY DONALDSON

I did something I thought I'd never do this year, kill a great buck on my own place! The late October cold front put him on his feet and I happened to be in the right tree. I have been after "Jackpot", a name given to him by the man who sold the property to me, Jack Bales, since I bought the property. He showed up on camera

mid-November last season and seemed to set up camp in the middle of the property. Periodically he hit the plots at night, gave me daylight pictures only one time, and of course, was never seen.

He has been at the forefront of all our plans, from how we set-up to how we hunted the property. We

didn't plant a couple smaller plots this year, as he would pop up randomly it seemed. Instead, we expanded the plot he liked to hang out in from one acre to two and a half acres. No small task there. I had him on a solid feeding pattern for the opener, but he never showed. In fact, after almost daily pics since July, he disappeared

after my first hunt there. Deer were entering the field from the north, but to my surprise, the bachelor group was actually bedding on the southwest side of the plot and walking all the way around to enter from the north. Opening night a couple does did just that, and while they didn't spook, they caught enough of my scent to put them on high alert. Several other deer, likely the bucks, were mulling around on that ridge as well, but never came into the plot.

I hunted there one other time, but stayed out as the weather was hot and the wind was not great. It was hard not to go down there during my vacation mid-October! I knew where I was going when the temps started dropping October 28. I set up in a climber just off the south side of the plot this time. When I set up, I forgot my limb saw (still in the old turkey vest!) and had to trim limbs with a 1-1/2" Swiss Army knife saw blade! But it did the trick!

I was on some water oak acorns they were tearing up. The plot was starting to come up as well. A spike fed in and out of the north end of the plot early. The wind swirled and he was gone. At 6:30, a 3-4 year old 8-point showed up in the southeast corner of the field, 30 yards away. He headed straight for an oak 40 yards away and munched on acorns until dark. It was tough to let him pass since we still had not taken a buck here yet, especially with my bow. A spike joined him shortly after walking right down the road. As I questioned my sanity for passing such a nice buck, a big-bodied deer popped out at the edge of the plot. I couldn't tell much about him because he was behind a tree and light was fading fast. When I caught



a glimpse of his left side through the branches, I knew he was a shooter and I thought (hoped!) he was the one I was after! It was one of those 'half a second glimpses then grab your bow'

moments! He did not join the other two bucks eating acorns under the oak, but instead headed straight to me and was quickly inside 20 yards. I turned to get a shot and some mud

from my boots fell to the ground, causing him to pause. I still can't believe he did not spook. The other deer in the plot did something at just the right time to shift his focus away from me. I came to full draw but he turned facing me and came in to 15 yards. He shifted back quartering to me a bit headed to the other deer allowing me to settle my pin and make the shot. The arrow thumped him and he headed towards the creek. He did not crash, but the other buck blew as he headed that way also. I eased down and checked my arrow. Very little blood and some gut. I backed out and we came back 4 hours later. He wasn't far. My buddy had come with his dog and we found him 80 yards away. The first time I put my hands on him, I realized how impressive this kind of mass is. 6" bases and incredible palmation. He was a 6x5 last year, but this year his 2 & 3



on one side combined into a common base split G2. Several kickers on his bases and one on his other G2. We weighed him at 230 pounds and aged him at 6 1/2+. We hunted this deer

carefully and it paid off. I didn't think he would slip up, but I am glad I was able to make my shot count. He scored 160 1/8". I hope I am lucky enough to hunt another one like him again!

*Train up a child*  
IN THE WAY HE SHOULD GO,  
*even when he is old*  
HE WILL NOT DEPART FROM IT.

PROVERBS 22:6



PHOTO BY DEB ATWOOD LOGAN



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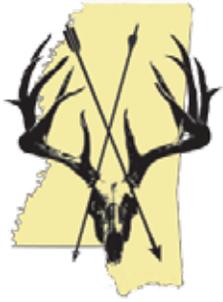
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**MISSISSIPPI BOWHUNTER**

*The official publication of*  
Mississippi Bowhunters Association  
P O Box 773  
Starkville, MS 39760

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