

TEXAS BOWHUNTERS' JOURNAL

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Texas Bowhunters' Journal
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Am I Blue? Yes I'm Blue!

By Michael Middleton

Fortunately, through written medium you are unable to hear my off-key rendition of a song made popular by a legendary Texan and past winner of the prestigious Los Cazadores Big Buck Contest! But don't think for a moment that the color scheme of this issue (it's blue on blue if you printed it out in black and white) isn't symbolic of how hunters across the state are feeling at this very moment. If you drive just outside the city and listen very carefully, you might just hear mourners crooning a sorrowful tune as another deer hunting season comes to an end. You just thought those were coyotes howling at the moon last weekend.

Even if you are one of the fortunate few, like me, that still has a couple of more days (at the time of this writing) to make a last ditch effort to cash in on the new state record or add to your freezer, it's time to face the music: your time has run out!

It's time to pack away your camouflage and your hunting gear and sit idly by for the next eight months until the dawn of a new season. Or is it?

There are plenty of activities that can serve as a support group for bowhunting junkies. First of all, we are fortunate to live in a state with such an abundance of actual bowhunting opportunities outside of the standard whitetail deer season.

Texas boasts some of the finest exotic game ranches in the country, where you can challenge and stretch your skills on an infinite number of big game animals. In addition, many areas of the state offer hog hunting opportunities that range from fully guided hunts, complete with lodging, to free river bottom hunting in the

many National Forests throughout the eastern half of the state. Many farmers and ranchers will happily allow you to "eradicate" these perceived nuisances. Finally, the Rio Grande Turkey season is a saving grace for spring bowhunters.

Outside of actual hunting opportunities, nearly every summer weekend somewhere in the state are

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What To Do In The Off Season

By Paul Waggoner

This story begins in the spring of 1997. A couple hunting and 3D friends of mine were discussing the upcoming deer season when we decided, after being in a few summer hog hunts, that we would go exotic hunting in August. So as you can imagine the months drug out until finally we were on a four-day weekend we all scheduled off. We left on our eight hour trip late on evening arriving at the Carta Valley Wildlife Ranch at about 4:30 AM on a Friday morning. The owner of this ranch had given us the combination to the lock, so we could let ourselves in. We were surprised to see such a huge main house, that overlooked the massive south Texas ranch. It looked as if it went on forever. After we settled in to our nice, 3 bedroom ranch house, we hurriedly got ready for that morning's hunt. We followed our host out to the stand sites, where I dropped of my first buddy, and as luck would have it another friend and I watched a huge fallow deer and his does watch our host set our buddy up in his stand. Later we found out that they never saw the deer. Oh well, we proceeded up to our next stand where my other friend got out. Sorry, we saw no

animals there. By the luck of the draw I was last to go to my stand. As we slowly drove down the ever-lightening dirt trails, I finally came to my spot; the owner told me that he thought he saw some nice rams at the end of the trail. As I waited for dawn I swear I could see an animal in every bush that the wind touched. If you've ever been hunting you know what I'm talking about. As dawn slowly showed me what was at the end of the field I had been watching, I saw a group of about 6 Corsican goats milling around. Even though I know better, I figured that I could sneak up on the biggest ram without him knowing. After about 20 yards on a 200-yard stalk, he saw me. So I watched my wall mount run away! Oh well I thought, it's just the first day.

It was getting to be about time for us to go in and rest for the afternoon hunt, when one of my hunting partners showed up. We talked for a while and decided to run up a small ridge, one on each side to see if anything was bedded down in the ravine. After that I decided I would finish the morning by just going over the hill I was on just to check out the landscape. As I started down the rocky backside of the hill, I saw a ledge and made my way to it. After a few minutes of just looking at the magnificent scenery, there were some "clip-clop" sound coming from below me. As I froze in excitement, or whatever that feeling is when a wild animal is coming into you, the sounds got closer. I was standing on a 2-foot ledge, 15 foot above the ground when I saw a ram grazing on the sparse grass. As the ram closed the distance, I was quickly looking for shooting solutions. I saw an opening, between a small cedar tree and a bush, about 8-feet wide. I slowly drew back my bow and waited for him to enter the opening. At about 30 yards out, he stopped right where I wanted him to. Everyone

gets lucky once! I released my arrow and heard that great "THUMP" sound, as he circled around the way he had come.

So now I was pumped wanting to do about 100 things at once, but I knew to leave him alone. I then decided to find my buddy who was on the opposite hill. After about fifteen minutes, I found him and unbelievably he followed me back. When we returned to my perch, we slid down the rest of the hill to start looking for some blood signs. To my surprise there was none where I hit him, but after a sane person pointed out to me that the blood started another 2 foot away, I felt better. As I was looking at the start of my trail I heard my friend mumble something under his breath, sounded like "lucky Mustard". That wasn't too complementary to me! My friend had just seen my ram, with just over a full curl, laying down 15 yards away on the Rock Hill. After I finished my dance and praised my bow, we went and got him.

Today this ram hangs on my wall, much to the dismay of my wife, right above my bar. So if you're thinking about something to do in the off season, try exotics. It's the thrill of opening day without the wait!



Author with a fine Corsican Ram taken from the Carta Valley Wildlife Ranch in the Spring of 1997.

Texas Archery Clubs

Arrowhead Archery Club – Cleveland
Mike Clark (281) 592-8500
2nd and 4th Saturdays, 10-2

Brazs County Archers Club – Bryan
Daryl Ollinger (409) 778-6875
2nd Sunday, 1pm

Buffalo Field Archery Club – Houston
Vance Meischen (281) 890-3787
3rd Sunday, 10-2

Austin Archery Club – Austin
Bob Sarrels (512) 282 5302
3rd Sunday, 10-2

Brenham Archery Club – Brenham
Michael Luchak (409) 830-0842
1st Sunday, 1pm

Cherokee Bowhunters Archery Club – Wells, David Seymore (409) 637-2575
3rd Sunday, 1pm

Chisolm Trail Archery Club – Salado
Jack Justice (254)939-5639

College Station Archery Club – Scott Smith (409) 764-9394
2nd Sunday, 1pm

Cowtown Bowmen Archery – Ft. Worth
Justin (817) 367-8696

Polk County Archery Club – Livingston
Christy Ellison (409) 327-4552
3rd Saturday, 10am

Salt Grass Archery Club – Texas City
Tom Reed (409) 740-6877
2nd Sunday, 9am

Banana Bend Bowhunters – Baytown
Gary Dunn (281) 421-2590
1st and 3rd Saturday, 9am

Traditional Bowhunters of Texas
Bobby Buff (830) 988-2237
Shoot locations and times vary

Highland Lakes Archery Club – Marble Falls, Ralph Clark (830) 693-2847

E-mail your club shoot to TBJ

Keys To Success- TENT BLINDS

By Glenn Lemke

Over the years of pursuing the whitetail, I have hunted from many different types of blinds and stands. I have built permanent tree stands, put up ladder stands, used both hang-ons and climbing stands, moved tripods from location to location, thrown together ground brush blinds, and tried to duplicate some of the other types of commercial blinds. Blinds and stands are designed to give the hunter an advantage over the game. Their first purpose is to conceal, thus allowing the hunter close proximity to the animal they are pursuing. It has been my experience that anytime a new element is put into the whitetail's world, he will become both curious and cautious.

With the exception of possibly hang-ons, blinds that can be seen at eye level will take some adjustment time for the animal to feel comfortable around.

A tower stand or tripod used for rifle hunting can be used immediately since animals taken from these are usually at a much greater distance than in bowhunting. The hang-on and climbers are also less conspicuous due to the height they are placed. All others need to be given extra cosmetic treatment by using surrounding cover to add to the concealment factor and given at least a day or two for animals to adjust to the newness. Once they are aware that no danger comes from this new "thing" they will lose a little of that cautiousness.

One of the blinds that I have used with success is the tent blind. Tent blinds come in various sizes, shapes, materials, camo patterns, and price ranges. In the December issue of Texas Bowhunter's Journal I mentioned the use of a tent blind, that after considerable modifications and some time in the field, became a successful blind to harvest deer from. This particular blind is made of nylon and allows considerable light to penetrate. Although light and easy to transport, it is quite noisy. Personally, I prefer to use a tent blind that is made of heavier material, has a strong integral frame, is quieter, and is large enough for two hunters. The blind that I use is called Lucky's Tent Blind and has a Bushlan brown camo pattern which blends very well with South Texas fall foliage.

By positioning a tent blind near, but not on top of the whitetails' lines of travel, or around feeding areas, and then adding that additional touch of natural surroundings you should be able to have game come within bowrange without a problem. The actual taking of that animal can present additional problems. Being enclosed also helps with your scent control. You can also be as comfortable as you want. I personally use a portable director's type chair that is light, but very solid and quiet. It is advisable that you practice shooting not only from your choice of seat, but out of the blind as well.

It was from this type of blind that I successfully harvested several does and a nice 125 class buck this season. As I wrote in the first issue of Texas Bowhunters Journal, I have the privilege of hunting two ranches in South Texas. One of these ranches is located in Kinney County and the other in Zavalla County. It was from the Zavalla county ranch that I harvested a P&Y in 1995. It was also at this ranch this year that I took the 125" eight pointer.



A tent blind, such as this model sold in Cabela's, should be positioned near a whitetail's travel routes. Adding a touch of natural surroundings will help prevent deer from being spooked.

On Tuesday, December 22, the ranch owner, Ray Branch, (also known in other circles as Mr. Raymond) and I decided to try to make at least two more hunts at the Zavalla property before Christmas. This would probably be the last time we would be able to hunt this ranch this season. For the past several seasons we have watched and photographed two very good eight pointers in an area known as Spring Break. As recently as the weekend before both of these bucks had been seen on both the morning and afternoon hunts. I was determined to try for one of these with my bow. "Mr. Raymond" urged, and to some degree harassed me about needing to use my 300 Win. and not having to worry about setting up a blind, toting archery equipment, and having to trail another buck. There was a constant reminder "You got the number for that tracking dog?"

TENT BLIND COMPANIES

Lucky's Tent Company
2254 Main Street, Ulby, Mi. 48475
517-658-8686

Invisablind
Mark Muller Enterprises
3606 Central Ave. Catawissa, Mo. 63015
314-257-2804
www.huntingproducts.com/blind.html

Double Bull Archery LLC
POBox 923, Monticello, Mn. 55362
888-464-409
www.doublebullarchery.com

Redhead
2500E Kearney, Springfield, Mo. 65898-0123
1-888-733-4323
www.basspro.com

Cabela's
One Cabela Dr, Sidney, Neb. 69160
800-237-4444
www.cabelas.com

It was around 1:30 when we arrived at the ranch. The temperature was in the high 70's, but we had seen bucks chasing does as we entered the ranch. I knew where I wanted to set up and had good feeling about the afternoon. I set the tent blind in an area about 5 yards off the main road, as the heavy undercover brush did not allow for more distance. I used cut mesquite and blackbrush as the two basic materials to brush in the blind. Purple sage and white brush helped to fill the voids. From a distance of 15 yards this tent blind looked very much like a pile of brush. I established two shooting lanes, one out of the left rear window and one from the right window. from either the right or left, traveling down well-established trails. I knew that we were expecting a drastic wind change in the next twelve hours, and I had sprayed myself and the blind with scent control. I also used coon urine scent, which I sprayed on the cut brush and directly on the blind. It took me almost an hour to set up. By 3:00 I was ready to hunt, but felt that I needed to try to remove some of the body odor that I had acquired during my building process. I drove back to the camp area and took a dip in the pond. By 3:30 I was not only wide-awake, but also felt good about the afternoon hunt. I had corned several spots to the right and left in hopes of not only drawing in deer, but also holding them. Shortly after I arrived at my stand, I had a small three-pointer approach from the right side. He paid very little attention to my blind and to my surprise must have had a bad cold. He walked directly in front of the blind, but never picked up my scent. Around 5:30, a four pointer walked in on one of the trails from the left. He stayed with the other buck for another fifteen minutes and then both left. Right before dark I had a huge javelina feeding out of the right window. I decided to try to make the shot I had to shift my chair in order to get

position. As I moved, I hit my bow on the metal chair and the javelina quickly vacated the area. I realized that for the morning hunt I needed to concentrate on only one shooting lane. As darkness



Author with 125 class eight pointer taken from a tent blind from Lucky's Tent Company

approached, I made my plan of action for the next morning.

The norther arrived on cue and by midnight the temperature had dropped into the high 30's. The next morning brought overcast skies, wind, and cold. Did I mention that tent blinds are also good windbreaks and as a result are fairly warm? During the night the winds had shifted the brush on the blind and now I actually had only one shooting lane. My shot would be to the left or not at all. I had once again corned heavily to the left. I had also placed a tarsal gland in a bush about 25 yards away, hoping that this would also help attract a big buck. Long before I could see, I could hear deer eating corn. At first light I could make out several deer working the road. As the morning progressed I had does and small bucks work in and out of the area. Several deer came within five yards of the tent blind without the slightest idea that I was lurking within. At eight o'clock a narrow, but heavy horned eight walked in from my right and went directly to the tarsal gland. He proceeded to try to tear it out of the bush. It really irritated him that he could not get the other "buck" out of the area. He would walk away, eat a few kernels of corn, harass the smaller bucks and then go back to the mock scrape. This went on for some time. At one point in this game he walked within 5 yards of my shooting window, stopped and stared into the blackness of the window. It was hard to hold back a laugh; his quizzical look reminded me of a confused canine. He never figured out what was on the other side. As he and the other deer continued to

feed and move around, it suddenly became apparent that they were all focused on something to my right. Deer will definitely tell you by their body language when another animal is approaching. It may be only another doe or small buck approaching, but many times the largest buck in the group you are watching will alert you that a more dominant buck is approaching. I slowly turned to my right to see a large, wide antlered buck staring back at me. He was no stranger. I had seen this deer on previous hunts. This buck did not see me, but quickly realized that all was not well at that particular spot and quickly exited to the north. I knew by his overall attitude he was not going far and I began getting ready to make the shot that I was sure would materialize. Within a sort minute, this fine eight stepped into my shooting lane at 15 yards. The Goldtip shaft and 100 grain Goldtip Gladaitor broadhead entered at the middle of the rib cage. A classic high butt kick and quick exit told me that I had made a good hit. I sat in my easy chair for about ten minutes waiting for my heart to stop pounding before I proceeded to dismantle my blind. In less than five minutes I had the blind down. I was ready to start tracking. I found good blood within ten yards and decided to wait another thirty minutes before continuing to track. I walked back up the road to where we have a tower stand to see if there were any animals feeding on the other sendero. The other huge eight was feeding not fifty yards distance. I savored the moment and thought about next year. Plans were forming.

I had shot my buck at eight twenty and at nine o'clock I found him not seventy five yards from the point of impact. The shot had taken out part of the heart and both lungs. The two inch mechanical had done its job well! As mentioned this buck scored 125, had a broken right brow tine, and field dressed 130 pounds. At first sight, I was convinced that he would make the book. Although that was not the case, this deer is a fine trophy

If you haven't tried a tent blind, you might want to put one on your wish list; they can definitely add another mark on the success side.

Am I Blue? *Continued from page 1*

3-D tournaments offered by pro shops, hunting clubs and associations. If you've never shot 3-D, it's an exciting and competitive way to keep your skills sharp during the off-season.

If all else fails, take a page out of my book for last off-season. Outside of weekly trips to Arrowhead Archery to shoot the DART Interactive Target System, I used the entire off-season to rebuild my lovely bride's "emotional bank account!" We did whatever she wanted to do, whenever she wanted to do it. If she wanted to shop for material to cover her couches, I was there! With every "Yes, Dear" uttered from my mouth, I made a mental deposit in the emotional bank account. By the time the 1998 Whitetail season opened, not only did she *let* me go hunting, she actually *encouraged* it! However, while I may be blue over the end of the season, it seems that I'm back in the red in the emotional bank account. Time to start making new deposits. "Yes Dear, I'm coming!"

Bowhunting Hot Links

www.edersbow.com – The definitive bowhunting source. Check out this on-line magazine, catalogue and discussion forum.

www.terraserver.com – Locate aerial maps of your favorite hunting area.

<http://tycho.usno.navy.mil/srss.html>
- Plan your hunts, and vacations, for next season based on the moon phase!

http://members.tripod.com/~DFW_Bowsite/main.htm

- TexasT's website for Dallas/Ft. Worth area Bowsiters, including Elk Bowhunter, JPBruni, CAT and Coyote65! Hmm, very interesting!

Around the Campfire: *Happy Holidays!*

By Michael Middleton

The holidays are quite unique around our campfire. I've found that some people struggle with whether they should stay at home and spend the holidays with their families, or take advantage of the time off and the cooling weather to go hunting. Many marriages have been strained because of the dilemma. At our hunting camp, we solve the dilemma by bringing the families to the hunting camp. And I don't mean just wives and children! I'm talking extended families.

This past Thanksgiving, for example, we had aunts, uncles, cousins, fiancées, in-laws, out-laws and even two great-grandma's that made the trip down the bumpy ranch roads to our deer camp. Lloyd's family alone amounted to four generations!

As you might imagine, the logistics of pulling off such an event can be quite nightmarish! Finding a place for that many people to sleep is next to impossible. After convincing Lloyd that the chivalrous thing to do was to give up his bed for his grandmother rather than making a pallet on the floor for her, everybody else drew straws and flipped coins to determine who got the remaining beds, who else got the portable cots and air mattresses, and finally the unfortunate ones that were relegated to sleeping bags on the cold, hard tile floors in the main cabin. Things were complicated by the fact that while cleaning up after dinner that first night, a six-inch centipede scrambled across the floor before Lloyd's wife, Anita, managed to smack it with a broom. Then started the rumors that centipedes always travel in pairs, and where you find one, more than likely there's another. The ladies stayed up half the night pulling all the sheets off the beds, moving the mattresses and furniture and vacuuming every inch of floor until they were completely satisfied that there was not a mate for the critter that the kids were now passing around on a stick like they

were displaying a trophy. And judging from the droopy eyes frantically searching for the nearest coffee pot the following morning, it was apparent that not all were fully convinced that the second multi-legged creature hadn't found a safe haven in the bottom of their sleeping bag and waited to take revenge for the death of its mate.

The hunting wasn't much of a problem. Lloyd, Edward and I were really the only ones that cared to get up before daylight in the mornings to trek out to our stands. I'm not sure we wouldn't have been better off sleeping in, as once everybody else started waking up, the first thing they wanted to do was ride around the ranch roads in search of deer. For some reason, I thought my stand was further away from the road than it is. With Allen cruising the roads on his four-wheeler showing is new fiancée how to "hunt", and Benji finally pulling away from his Nintendo long enough to take his friend, Paul, out for a little quail hunting, and Anita taking her three year old daughter, Kay, for joy rides on another four wheeler, and the remaining crew all piled into the green suburban riding around and watching through binoculars as all the deer around my stand now darted back into the brush, the chances of bagging my Pope and Young buck were more likely if I were tucked soundly in my sleeping bag!

We had a huge Thanksgiving dinner on Thursday evening, that if I recall correctly, consisted of no less than 27 individuals! I'm not sure the Pilgrims and Indians had as many guests outside eating around their campfire! Amazingly, there was enough food for everybody and even leftovers that lasted the rest of the weekend.

Friday afternoon, Eugene rolled in. . . in his Peterbuilt, of course, as he was one of the unfortunate ones that had to spend Thanksgiving day with his in-laws. He managed to get a load of gravel from Dallas to Victoria for delivery on Friday morning, and then swung by the ranch in his rig after he dumped. By the time he rolled in, he was too tired for the evening hunt, so

Lloyd, Edward and I headed out without him. The rest of the crew all loaded up and headed to Mexico for some day-after-Thanksgiving Christmas shopping.

As I sat on my stand I had two good sized hogs venture in to feed on the corn, along with eleven baby pigs. I watched them for a while, as several more large hogs joined in for their own Thanksgiving feast. I decided to take a nice sow. I drew back my bow, picked a spot low behind her shoulder and released the arrow, sending hogs scattering in every direction! I followed the stuck pig as far as I could see, and turned to see that two of the other hogs had already returned to continue their feast. I decided that because my freezer was bare, I would make it a double and take another hog. Another shot found it's mark and sent the hogs in the same direction as the previous.

I waited until dark, and then returned to camp to get a tracking party together. I was able to recruit Eugene, Lloyd, Allen and Benji to help, overcoming the strong objections of Faye, Allen and Benji's mother. You see, Benji is Faye's baby and she is somewhat overprotective. We finally convinced her he would be in good hands, but we decided to wait until after dinner to leave. We quickly headed out after dinner, with two flashlights and a hand-held spotlight. We soon located and retrieved the first hog and drug it to the road, then continued on the trail of the second. We had good blood initially, but it began thinning as we ventured deeper into the brush. The brush got thicker and we were forced to crawl on our hands and knees through the "tunnels" that the hogs had made through the white-brush. We were focused on our search until someone brought up a couple of good points: 1) what were we going to do if we found the hog and it was still alive, as there was only one way out and that was through us!; 2) we had no weapon in the event we did find the

hog; and 3) "Where in the hell are we?!"

It seems that we had wound our way through a series of tunnels so thick that we couldn't even stand up. We managed to back our way to an opening, but had lost all sense of direction and had no idea where we were. We were about as lost as we could possibly be on a 2,000 acre ranch. To complicate matters, the hand-held spotlight was completely dead, and the other two flashlights were going fast. We decided to alternate between the two flashlights to conserve the batteries. Eugene noted that the soft glow of the lights on the horizon was probably Laredo, and if we headed directly towards that light, we would eventually find a road. As we wandered through the darkness, we finally heard a vehicle driving on the roads. The vehicle stopped and we heard the faint yells of Allen and Benji's dad, Mike, calling out for us. "Keep yelling!" Allen exclaimed, so that we could follow his voice back to civilization. Once again we heard the faint, muffled voice. "We're coming! Keep yelling!" we all stated in unison. We now had a bearing of which direction we needed to head. As we walked quickly toward our destination, we heard Mike's vehicle speeding back down the ranch road. I guess he figures we can make it back from here, we all thought.

We did make it back to our vehicle, where we quickly loaded the hog and headed back to camp, as it was nearing midnight. As we headed back toward the main camp road, we saw headlights turn off of the main road onto the road we were on, then saw the headlights bouncing and swerving as a vehicle raced toward us. We met the vehicle in the road and I realized was my new pickup! What was Anita doing driving my NEW Chevy through the brush? Also inside the pickup were Mike and Faye. Mike quickly jumped out of the passenger door and ran over to us. "Is everybody okay?!" he exclaimed. "We're fine" I answered. His concern quickly turned to anger and I noticed

that both Faye and Anita had been crying.

"What's the problem", I asked. "Where the hell have y'all been" Mike yelled angrily. I soon came to realize that when we had hollered at him to "keep yelling" so that we could get our bearings, he had heard the phrase "GET HELP!" and had gone to do just that, getting Anita and especially Faye in a state of panic, thinking we were all dying in the deer woods!

The remainder of the weekend was quite tense. Although the incident was not mentioned again, Faye avoided talking to me and whenever I looked away I could feel her angry stare burning a hole in the back of my head! Everybody vowed never to have this many people at the deer lease again, with all of the wives and grandmothers stating that they would not be back next year. But I know time heals all wounds. After all, they all made the same promise last year! Happy Holidays!

January Calendar

3-D and Club Shoots

January 10

Brazos County Archery Club, 1pm

January 17

Austin Archery Club, 10-2
Buffalo Field Archery Club, 10-2

January 23

Traditional Bowhunters of Texas,
at Arrowhead Archery in Cleveland

January 24

Cowtown Bowmen Archery
Cross Roads Archery Club, 9-1

Don't Discount the Marts!

By Michael Middleton

Those of you that have spent a fair amount of time hanging out at an archery pro shop or lurking around any of the bowhunting web sites on the internet, such as The Bowsite, have heard the argument over whether a bowhunter should support his local pro shop by purchasing ALL hunting equipment and accessories there, even if it costs a little more, or perhaps save a little money by purchasing through mail order catalogs, over the internet, or at a discount store, like any of the "Marts". While my intention is not to fan the flames of that debate, at least not in this article, and I do purchase the majority of my hunting gear from my favorite pro shop, Arrowhead Archery in Cleveland, I will say that you should not discount the discounts, especially not at this time of the year!

One of the biggest arguments for buying your supplies at a pro shop is that in most discount stores, hunting gear is a seasonal item that they carry only during the hunting season. That's exactly the reason I say "GO THERE NOW!" Discount stores have such tight inventory controls that it costs more for them to stock items on the shelves than it does to liquidate them. That means steep discounts on those items after the season is over! Between now and the time the stores do their annual inventory, usually in February, you can make a killing on some great bargains.

Now is a great time to set up that backup bow or stock up on cover scents. Last season, just after the end of hunting season, I stopped at a Mart in Houston. Their selection was limited, but they did have 12 oz. bottles of H.S. Scents Scent-Away spray on clearance for \$1 a bottle. I quickly purchased 5 bottles, along with a couple of packages of H.S. Scents Earth Scent Wafers for \$2 per

package. After I got home, I kept thinking about what a great deal I had gotten on the Scent-Away. Then I started questioning myself, asking "Why didn't you buy them ALL?" The very next weekend, I found an excuse to go by that same Mart, forty miles from my house, and I bought the remaining sixteen bottles! I'll be scent free for the rest of my life!

Two seasons ago, I stopped by a Mart by my work where they had Kenco's Smart Timer deer feeders, which currently retail for \$69-\$74, on clearance for \$30 each. Unfortunately, I was at that time on a very limited budget and was only able to purchase three of the six they had on the shelf! But what a great deal on a great feeder!

Not all the Marts will have great deals, or even any hunting gear at all. But I make it a point during this time of year to not drive by any Mart without stopping to check it out. I'd be willing to bet that I've been to more Marts across the state than most of their regional managers! More times than not, I enter quickly, scope it out, and leave without making a purchase. Usually I'm in and out in less than five minutes. The drawback to stopping at every Mart in the state is that often I have my wife with me. And if your wife is anything like mine, you know that women can't enter a Mart without buying something. But that's another story, now isn't it?

The key to shopping for bargains at the Marts is not to go in search of a particular item. If you go looking for something specific, chances are you'll leave disappointed. But if you're just looking for a deal, you're just liable to strike it rich. On a recent trip down to our South Texas ranch, I stopped at Mart that's about five miles out of the way (sorry, the city must remain anonymous to protect my territory!) just to see what they had. I found a gold mine! I purchased a Strong Built ladder stand for \$42. I had seen it earlier in the season, and had hoped it would still be there. I also saw a twelve-foot climbing stick that had been reduced from \$49.96 to \$20, so I bought it too.

Then I saw they had a Strong Built climbing stand, which retails for \$99.96, reduced to \$50. "I have no use for a climbing stand," I thought to myself. I moved on to the smaller accessories. More bargains! There was a safety harness for \$6, and a \$4 ratchet tie-down for my Strong Built chain-on stand (which of course I had purchased at this very same Mart two years before for \$30!) I also loaded into my cart three Cobra Vibra-Tamer stabilizers for \$5 each (retails for \$19.96), a Cobra Windstalker fiber-optic sight for \$10 (retails for \$36.96), a pair of Ducks Back camouflage pants for \$10 (retail for \$28.96), Bohningnock glue and vanes for \$1.50, and several smaller accessories. I was somewhat disappointed that they had a bunch of Thunderhead broadheads, but they were not discounted from their \$28.96 price tag. As I wheeled my cart toward the register, I kept thinking about that \$50 climber that I had no use for. You guessed it, I bought it too! It didn't take long to find someone that wanted to take it off my hands.

As you can see, if you hit the Marts at the right time, you can come away with some nice bargains. And if it's convenient, don't hesitate to check back a couple of days later. The longer after the season, the steeper the discounts on remaining items. Remember those Thunderheads? I hit the store again on my return trip, only three days later, and my T-100's were red tagged to \$14! So next time you're driving by, stop in and see what great discounts they have. . . provided I didn't get there first!



Glenn Lemke with his early season doe killed in Center, Texas with Jennings Buckmaster.

Good Ol' Chicken Fried Backstrap

This recipe is too good (or at least too long!) to be in a side-bar! Therefore, it gets a page of its own! This is my personal "recipe" for THE BEST chicken fried backstrap, perfected through years of trial and error. Now, there ain't nothin' fancy about it, and it gets modified a little each time I cook it, depending on what spices are in the cabinet. The key to a perfect, tasty, crunchy, fluffy crust is to make sure you DOUBLE DIP it, and deep-fat fry it!

Required:

- Flour, a bunch
- Pepper
- Salt
- 2 eggs
- Large bowl full of milk
- One half of a venison backstrap
- Peanut Oil (Highly recommended over other oil types!)
- Two paper grocery sacks (Remember: Paper, not plastic!)

Optional:

- Tony Chachere's Cajun Seasoning
- Cayenne Pepper
- Your favorite spices
- Outdoor gas cooker
- 12 quart cast iron dutch oven
- Ore-Ida Onion Flavored Tator Tots.

Cut one folded grocery sack about twelve inches from the top. Cut resulting "O" from top of the sack down the crease to form one long, twelve inch strip of paper. Place end of strip into bottom of the cut sack, with remaining portion hanging over the side. This will serve to absorb the grease from your finished product. Set aside.

Break eggs into large bowl of milk. (Mix in any liquid spices of your choosing, such as Cholula, a Tex-Mex hot sauce, or other hot sauces). Slice backstrap into 1/2 inch cutlets. Place cutlets onto a cutting board and take outside. Using a meat cleaver, or the mouth of a glass Coke bottle, **beat the backstrap until well tenderized.** (This step is very important, don't skimp on quality to save time! Also, don't do this step in your wife's kitchen! Take it outside!) Toss tenderized cutlets into milk/egg mixture.

Dump a bunch of flour into other sack. Add some salt and pepper. Throw in some other seasonings. I'd tell you what kind and how much, but you know how you like it better than I do!

Fire up outdoor cooker to about 400 degrees. Fill dutch oven about half way from the bottom with peanut oil. There should be enough to more than cover the meat. Remove, one at a time, several pieces of backstrap and place carefully into sack full of flour mixture. Fold top of sack and shake vigorously. Add more pieces of backstrap until all are fully coated.

Remove each of the floured pieces of meat and lay them carefully on a clean plate. Add more flour and seasoning to the sack. Dip the flour covered cutlets, one at a time, back

into the milk/egg mixture until well coated and place back into the flour sack. **Note: This is where many people get lazy and ruin the whole dish! Take the time to double dip 'em!**

Inside the sack, you will now find small clumps of flour/egg/milk. Grab a couple of these and drop into peanut oil to check heat. You should have nice, bubbly grease and the "crunchies" should soon rise to the top. Remove "crunchies" and snack on them. Tasty!

When satisfied that oil is properly heated, place several pieces of meat into the pot. Once again, you should see a nice bubbling action. When the meat begins to float, stir gently for another couple of minutes and then remove and place in bottom of the cut grocery sack. **Be sure not to overcook!** Fold the next level of the top part of the sack over the first batch of meat. This will serve to soak grease and keep the batch warm. When second batch is done, put them on the second level and fold top over once again.

When all of the meat is cooked, deep fry Tater Tots until crispy. Remove from grease and place on top layer of paper sack. Gently grab the top of the paper sack and pull straight up. This will mix the Tater Tots and the meat into the sack, and most of the grease will be removed on the strip of paper. Grab a big ol' handful of meat and tots for your plate and serve with plenty of cold catchup! (You can serve with other vegetables, but the rest is just filler material anyway!)

Note: If you can't figure out the paper sack trick, screw it. Put paper towels in a pan!

The Last Shot

By J.P.Davidsson

The deer hunting season has now come to a close for most of us here in Texas, except for those in the southern region and it's now time to begin the pursuit of the 2nd most hunted animal in the state; the wild hog. I have always been curious about the intelligence levels of these cloven creatures. They (that committee of them) say that humans are the only animals that possess the ability to reason, but I have serious doubts concerning their findings. I had the privilege of attending their last meeting on this subject and had an opportunity to talk with some of them. I wanted to find out if any of them had ever hunted hogs and there was not a hunter in the entire committee. Who elects these people anyway? Are they impeachable?

Hogs are commonly known to be very intelligent animals and I believe they can reason. If intelligence runs in the family, Pot-bellied Pigs prove this beyond a doubt. I have heard many stories and actually witnessed a few unbelievable feats pulled off by these crafty little creatures. A friend of mine (who chooses to remain anonymous, so we'll call him Jack) owned one for a short time and was astonished by the amount of trouble "Link" could get into. Link came very close to becoming his namesake because right before Jack got rid of him, he seriously considered processing the little monster as an

alternative to giving him away. He said he would have had no regrets and would savor every last bite of every meal.

What other animal can put it's nose flat on a refrigerator door and suction cup the door open, then proceed to consume every piece of food from the refrigerated and freezer compartments? I don't know of very many households (with the exception of some hard core dieters) in which the refrigerator has a padlock on it. What other animal can unzip a purse, pull out a pack of gum, remove each individual piece from the foil wrapper and eat the entire pack, then eat the purse? The moments where Jack was pushed to his limit were when Link "treed" him. While Jack was attempting to reprimand him, Link would charge at full speed and chase him around the house. Now keep in mind this was a 30 pound pig with the will of a 300 pounder. Jack would end up at bay, standing on a chair, screaming at the top of his lungs. Link knew he could get away with it, so why not? I told Jack I would pay him good money to let me video these escapades but he didn't want anyone to know who really wore the hooves in the family.

These are the creatures we hunt, or at least their cousins. If you've ever tried stalking wild hogs with a bow, then you know what I'm talking about. Really big hogs are exactly like trophy whitetails; they didn't get that big by being stupid. Hogs possess another ability that is quite amazing as

well. They can laugh. Come on now, admit it, you know you've heard it. Your arrow just misses and the hog goes crashing off into the brush and you hear a faint chuckling as he speeds away. They are far more intelligent creatures than we give them credit.

TBJ

"A Bowhunter's Prayer To Diana"

by Dorothy Morrison

Submitted by Shari Newlon

Oh Silvery Huntress of the Night!
Diana of the pale moonlight!
Oh Goddess of the Silver Bow
Smile on your humble child, below

Come now to me and be my guest,
And aid me in this hunt...my quest!
In this endeavor, grant success.
Grant me patience - grant kindness Watch
over me and guide my steps

As I walk into the forest's depths.
Protect me from all injury
And close beside me, always be.

Aid me as I track the deer.
Through brush and thickets, far and near.
When it comes time to draw my bow
Grant me accuracy, here below
Guide my arrows with speed and skill
Grant painless death and swiftest kill.

Silvery Huntress, I am your child...
I hunt your forests, free and wild.
Bless this hunt, I ask of thee
Oh Great Diana, hear my plea
Goddess of Wild Ones and the Night!
Bless my table with food tonight!