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Texas Bowhunters' Journal
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Beating the Offseason Blues

By Michael Middleton

This is normally a tough time of the year for most hunters. Deer season has ended, so many of us put up our hunting bows in favor of 3D setups or perhaps even fishing poles and golf clubs.

But this offseason has been different for me, primarily due to the explosion of participation on our website, TexasBowhunter.com.

I was joined, in March, by good friends Casey Morris, David Simmons, Glenn Lemke, Paul Schwander and Cliff Self for an action packed hog hunt in South Texas. If you missed the excitement of our Video Live Hunt (tape delayed!), you missed one of the most thrilling adventures of the year! But don't worry, you can still check it out on the website

(www.texasbowhunter.com) by clicking on the Live Hunt link.

Glenn and I followed that hunt up with what is quickly becoming my newest passion, spring turkey hunting! Glenn and I were both able to arrow birds, with me harvesting my second turkey with a bow. That ranked right up at the top as one of my most enjoyable harvests ever! That hunt is also available on the site.

And believe it or not, I'm sitting inside my ICE Blind (Double Bull Archery) even as I type this, hunting hogs at a top secret location near my home! I guess I put the exclamation point on High Tech Redneck!

After you finish reading this exciting issue of TexasBowhunter's Journal, which includes guest columns by LSBA president Tomme Actkinson and Texas Trophy Hunter president Jerry Johnston, be sure to log onto the website to help get rid of your own offseason blues!

Kevin's First Bow Kill

By Tom Barker

“I think the shot was a little far back,” said Kevin, my thirteen year-old son, after I heard him shoot. I clicked off the flashlight that I was holding on his pins so he could see in the twilight and we were immediately in the dark of the Double Bull Blind set up 20 yards from the feeder. This was the last hunting opportunity of this trip we were going to have while hunting on the T-Post ranch near Laredo.

We had hunted three days a month earlier at the T-Post and had a great time, even though we brought nothing home. Kevin shot once and the pig happened to jump just as he shot and he only cut the hair of the pig. The next day he shot and thought he missed and reloaded and shot again at a different pig. When we went after the second pig we had a blood covered arrow but unfortunately we could only find one of the arrows and yet we had two blood trails. He must have skipped an arrow off of

another one. After three hours of searching we lost the trail and didn't recover either animal. Kevin followed up with Roland the next week and Roland assured him that the hits were not lethal since Roland or the vultures had not found any dead pigs. Kevin was relieved that even though he had made three high percentage shots and not recovered the pigs, that he might get another chance on them.

On this trip, we hunted the first night in the same place Kevin had shot and lost his pig the month before. The pigs came in about 15 minutes before dark and I was able to video the whole episode. Kevin drew and let down four times. Kevin told me later that he didn't want to wound another one and he could still wait for a good shoot. He was frustrated that the pigs were very excitable or there always seemed to be one behind the boars he had picked out or they seemed to be only head on shots. Once the corn and the daylight were gone, the pigs were gone too. I reinforced to Kevin that I was very proud that he choose not to take a low percentage shot and was willing to wait or even not

get anything while waiting for a good shot opportunity. He knew that this went with the territory when you are bow hunting. The next evening we were back at the same spot.

“You were at full draw for about three minutes. What happened?” I said after he shot. We went through the routine we go through after a shot so we have the best chance to recover the animal. Where was the hit? How did the animal react? Where did he run? How did the shot feel?

Kevin replayed the shot in his mind as he told me what happened. He was at full draw because he had to wait for the pig to clear the leg of the feeder. Then he had to wait for another pig to get from behind the boar he picked out. He thought it was low and a little back because the pig seemed to step forward just as he shot and Roland, the owner of the ranch, emphasized that we needed to shoot low on these pigs. He said his mechanics were good and the shot felt solid. The pig jumped and bolted off after being shot. He told me which way he ran. I reassured him that he did the best he could and we would just have to see.

We gathered up our bows and gear and exited the blind. Kevin walked over to the place



the pig was standing and I looked for the arrow. Kevin said, "I've got blood, and a piece of organ or something." The blood was good and he did have about a quarter sized piece of something. But the blood played out after about 10 yards. I could not find the arrow.

Since Kevin said he thought it was a little far back, the blood trail was not heavy and we could find no arrow, we decided to go back to camp and get something to eat before we resumed the search. Kevin was upset that he thought he might have made a poor shot when the pig stepped forward as he shot. I encouraged him that he might have caught the liver and the arrow may still be in him doing further damage.

We went back to camp and grabbed a bite to eat and after about 45 minutes we all returned to the feeder. Roland found the piece of flesh and said it might be liver. Kevin smiled when Roland said he thought it looked promising. Roland picked up the trail about five yards from where we lost it and it immediately became a solid blood trail. We went about 50 yards

with Roland in the lead and Kevin, two other hunters in our party and I in trail. Roland came to an abrupt stop, turned and said to Kevin, "This is your pig. You trail it." About five yards ahead Kevin spotted what Roland had seen a few seconds earlier, Kevin's first bow kill.

Kevin dragged it out and we returned to camp. Roland went through the ritual of the photographs and I took videos for Mom. Roland then showed and explained to Kevin how to field dress, skin and butcher his pig. Kevin also learned about pigs and fleas. In the process of

butchering the pig, we all saw that Kevin had made a perfect shot. Two blades of the Muzzy 100 had sliced through the pig's heart and then through the lungs. The pig never had a chance.

After shooting three times with nothing to show for it, he was happy to finally get off the snide. I told Kevin that he may shot 1000 animals in his lifetime, but this one will be the most memorable one that he will ever take, and I was thrilled to be there. I am also proud to have my son as my hunting partner. He was earned the trust.



Magical Mornings of the Hill Country

By Danny Evans

The whitetail season has come to an end and most bowhunters are now challenging themselves by shooting at paper targets. A lot of them do not know that there is an animal that will get their heart racing just as fast, if not faster, than the whitetail deer. This critter is the wild hog. Recently, the first weekend in March, I went to my lease that is in Lampasas, Texas to do some hog hunting. This article describes not only a hog hunt, but also a magical morning of the Hill Country.

Saturday morning proved not to be a productive morning in terms of seeing any hogs, but the sunrise was magical. The sounds of a new day are what get me out of the bed at 5:00 a.m.

Saturday evening proved to be a bit more exciting. At 6:30 p.m., I had a sow

come to the feeder. She had five little ones with her, so I did not even pick up my bow. I watched her and her piglets for about ten minutes when I noticed the sow staring into the cedar trees to her left. I looked where she was looking but never saw what it was that she was looking at. It had to be another hog because she never put her head back down to eat. This went on for a good five minutes when there in all his glory stood a big boar hog, just inside of the cedar break. Once he made his presence known, the sow and her little ones swiftly departed. That boar and I played chess for about 25 minutes. He would walk out toward the feeder and then stop blow dirt with his nose and then walk back into the cover of the cedar trees. I, each time, would begin to draw and about the time I came to a full draw, he would turn and go back to safety. It finally got dark and I got out of my stand and let the big boy have his victory. He won today, but there is tomorrow.

Sunday morning and again the alarm clock went off way too early (5:00 a.m.), but as always I got up and like all other mornings

headed to the store for my favorite drink (at five in the morning). You guessed it, **coffee**. With that done and as I was drove out to the lease I never dreamed of what was going to happen during this morning's bowhunt.

I began the morning like all others after getting into the stand. No, I didn't! What I did was begin to listen to the sounds of another morning being born. While I was in meditation I was suddenly brought back to the reality of why I was there. I caught movement to my right. I could see a hog moving toward the feeder. It was still dark, but light enough to see movement. I watched as the hog went to the feeder and began to root around looking for a treat. I waited until I could see well. I thought it maybe the sow that I had seen yesterday and I did not want to take her, but after it got a little lighter I could tell that it was a boar. I picked up my bow, got the release set under the nock and waited for the open shot. "No need to rush, take your time, wait for your shot," I kept thinking as my heart was beating out of my chest. Broadside, 20 yards! I drew my Jennings Speedmaster to full draw and settled the Tru Glow pin just behind his shoulder, and squeezed the release's trigger. THWAP! The Thunderhead



125 found its mark. The hog spun off into the cedars and crashed about thirty yards. Then as if it were all a dream it was silent.

As all the teachings of the archery world has taught me, I stayed in the stand waiting the mandatory thirty minutes to allow my animal to expire.



feeder. Just as before, but this time it was a lone sow. Once she turned her head away from me I reached for my bow nocked another Gold Tip carbon arrow and waited for my shot. It did not take long. I came to full draw as she was quartering away from me and touched off the release. Again, I heard that familiar sound of the arrow hitting home and she too spun and ran about thirty yards and fell over. Again I sat back and waited, but this time I did not wait the mandatory

thirty minutes. I think that all I could wait was about five minutes. I climbed down and went to retrieve my first hog, and then I went to retrieve my second hog. I loaded the first hog in the truck. While I was dragging the second hog to the truck I began to think about how beautiful the morning had been and how I look forward to hearing that stupid alarm clock again!

Now, you may be thinking that this is where the story ends, so did I. I hung my bow up and leaned back thinking that I was going to enjoy a magical morning in the hill country, but just as I got comfortable I saw movement in the cedar trees. I sat up and before I could reach for my bow another hog came up to the



Helping out a Young Bowhunter!

By Ben Stovall

It all started on the morning of October 2, 1999. I was in the stand by 6:15. On the way in I saw something flash and a deer ran off over in the direction of the feeder. After getting to the stand and waiting 30 minutes, a deer showed up. It was a spike. He was at 35 yards eating. I realize now that I had no business shooting that far, but I was young and thought my 46 pound bow would reach that far. Anyway, I shot at the deer. I missed twice. I misjudged the distance.

After coming home and regaining my confidence I went out for another hunt that evening at 3:30. When I got to the stand, I sprinkled a little corn out at 10 yards and 20 yards in order to get a closer shot. Right at dark the deer showed up. There was a spike, a 5 point and (what I thought was a pope and young 12 point. By the time the 12 point got into range (20 yards) I thought it might be a little too dark,

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but decided to pull back my bow. I drew the bow without alerting the deer. I aimed at the 12 point but then thought, "No, I can't. It is too dark." I drew my bow 3 more times, just for practice, and waited for the deer to leave so I could walk back to the truck.

The next morning I didn't see anything. Sunday, October 3rd, 1999 I went back out in the evening. After waiting, the spike and the 5 point came in at 20 yards. I decided to shoot the spike because the 5 point might have a chance to be a nice buck someday. It was getting close to dark, so I aimed right behind the shoulder and squeezed the release. The arrow hit and the deer ran off. I was not sure exactly where he ran because the 5 point was with him and I saw two deer running off in different directions. I went home and 1 hour later, I came back to track the deer. There was no blood, nor was there an arrow.

We walked to where the two deer had run, hoping to find the dead deer. We looked for about 3 hours and went home. I was sick. I thought that I should go back to gunhunting,

which I have been doing since I was 8, and have killed around 20 deer with it. The next day my uncle and I went back out to look for the deer. We looked around for a long time and never found him. He was a "gunhunter only" kind of guy so, he did not like me bowhunting. He said that I should give up bowhunting. That's when I logged onto TexasBowhunter.com to ask how I could track a deer. And I wanted a reason to keep bowhunting.

Zach Potter answered me. He gave me some encouraging advice and it helped encourage me to go back out there with my bow again.



Thirteen year-old Ben Stovall with his first Archery deer! Congratulations Ben!

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I went for about 1 week and then on Saturday, October 23, I saw three deer. They were all does. Two of them fed within 15 yards and I shot one right where the ten ring would be. I waited 1 hour and then went to track her. She was only 40 yds. I was really happy! This time the arrow penetrated fully. It had not on the spike.

On November 5, I found the spike 322 yards from where I had shot him. I had made a good shot, but with a 46 pound bow and a spitfire blade that was not enough to go thru him for a blood trail.

When gun season started on Nov. 6, I was talked into getting the gun back out. I hunted with it for about 3 weeks. I never saw anything big enough to shoot with a gun. There were about 6 deer coming into a wheat field. I decided to set up on the side of the trail and try to get another one with my bow.

December 4, 1999 I shot an 8 point. It was about 30 degrees and I was freezing when all of a sudden the 8 point walked up. He was eating at 15 yards when I drew my bow

back and shot him. I made another perfect shot, right in the 10 ring. The arrow went in, hit a rib and came back out the first hole. I went home and came back one hour later. We brought the Coleman lantern (I would have never found him without it.) We tracked on a good blood trail. We found him 85 yards back in the brush. This was the happiest day of my life!

The rest of the year I never got my gun back out. I loved bowhunting so much that i couldn't keep from bowhunting! I never got another shot at a deer, but I had a lot in range. After this year of bowhunting, I probably will never get back out my deer rifle. It just isn't any fun to do that for me.

I hope you enjoyed my story and if you have any questions that you want to ask me, then ask me and I will tell you. Thanks for reading my story!



Ben, quickly becoming an experienced bowhunter, followed up on his successful doe harvest with this beautiful eight point buck!

Range Wars in Texas

By Tomme R. Actkinson

In the old west, range wars were fought over how to use the land. Farmers wanted to fence it off and plant their crops and ranchers wanted it to be open range. The different philosophies of land use led to heated exchanges, violence and legislation. Similar to the above a range war appears to be looming in the hunting community. On one hand are the high fence ranchers who want to privatize the deer herd so that they can set their own bag limits and seasons. On the other are landowners and hunters who feel that wildlife belong to everyone. A battle may be shaping up in the next legislative session, especially if a proposal endorsed by Jerry Johnston.

Jerry wrote an editorial in Texas Trophy Hunter magazine this month in which he supported the high fence movement and suggested that the general season should be moved to the beginning of October in order to allow better

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management. He further suggested that the October rifle hunts would allow more hunting opportunities as landowners pursued management deer with their children.

I have two problems with the idea of starting the general season at the start of October. First, and most notable, is that it would wipe out the archery season. Second, I feel that there are better ways to increase hunter opportunities, control management deer and provide additional funds to ranchers (both high fence and otherwise).

Why would an October 1st start date destroy the archery season? To answer this, let's look at how people become bowhunters. I began bowhunting twenty-five years ago. I picked up a bow because it gave me an extra month in the woods. When the general season started, I put down my bow and picked up my rifle. It was easier, more efficient and it helped me to put enough venison on the table to feed a family of six. Over time I used the rifle less and less. Now I hunt almost exclusively with a bow. I feel many

others caught bowhunting fever the same as I. First it was just an additional way to hunt. Now it is a way of life.

Bowhunting also opened hunting opportunities for me that I never would have found otherwise. Rifle season was relatively short and expensive. On the places I hunted the deer disappeared after opening week. Bowhunting day leases, and some public facilities dedicated to bowhunting, allowed me not only an opportunity to hunt at a reasonable price, but also allowed me to see far more game than I did on a small hunting lease. Some ranchers have discovered a side benefit of this. They can hunt far more hunters, and give many more hunting opportunities when they open the ranch to bowhunters. They can also do this without over harvesting the deer herd. I fear that the management hunts that Jerry speaks about for the rancher and his kids would soon become simply less expensive rifle "management" package hunts for out of state hunters. This might increase revenues for the rancher, but I don't see it as really increasing hunting opportunities. If we want to increase hunting opportunities and ranch revenues, I feel we need to encourage more bowhunting opportunities.



I believe a lot of high fence operations have missed the bowhunting opportunity. Leasing to bowhunters is more work. Since the harvest is less assured, charges are lower and you must put through a higher volume of hunters to make the same amount of money. But is this bad for hunting? Doesn't higher volume equal more hunting opportunities? High fence ranchers invest in their deer, they might also consider a need to invest in hunters and increasing hunting numbers. It may be more trouble to have a lot of bowhunters on the ranch. In the long term it might also be real good for hunting.

But why not privatize the deer herd. Why not let ranchers own their deer? It's been argued that on a high fenced operation poor managers only hurt themselves. I'm a little suspicious of this argument.

I have mixed feelings about quality deer management (QDM) and high fences. I know that many people who do this have taken on a lot of expense because they love trophy deer. They spend

hours and megabucks improving deer habitat, planting food plots, working on genetics and allowing their deer to age to a mature size. I have read Al Brothers & Murphy E. Ray Jr.'s book Producing Quality Whitetails (which started the QDM movement) and understand the dream of people who want to produce big deer.

I also understand that it is hard, perhaps impossible, to raise trophy deer unless you have a high fence or a lot of cooperation. Deer take five to six years to reach their full potential. If your acreage is small enough that your bucks wander next door, you may never have better than mediocre bucks.

That's what happened to me in the eighties. I and several other guys went together and bought 323 heavily wooded acres near Gatesville.* (Note this may not seem like much land if you hunt on big ranches, but this ranch size is pretty typical in central Texas, and the cost is two to three hundred thousand dollars. Needless to say we didn't pay cash.). We were pretty raw in the game management business but

we planted food plots, spent money on habitat improvement and didn't allow anyone to shoot a deer unless the antlers were beyond the ears. After five years we had taken one very nice mature buck. But our kids never got a shot and we also weren't getting any improvement in the size of our deer. The deer we were raising went next door and were shot. In retrospect we probably never should have tried QDM on this place. Our kids would have been happy with those younger 6 and 8 pointers. The only way we could have been able, as a small landowner, to have big deer would have been to high fence. I'm not sure that would have been good for us. It might have ruined hunting for our neighbors as well.

What I'm trying to say is that if you are a serious trophy hunter or trophy deer producer, I can understand why you go to a high fence operation. People who love big deer will want to produce them and this may be impossible without high fences or good cooperation from one's neighbors. Even though I may not directly oppose high fences, however, does not mean that I am overly sympathetic to those that then want to privatize the deer herd. Simply being fortunate enough to own a big ranch and being willing to spend large amounts

of money on deer does not mean that a person should be able to totally control the game. Certainly I don't feel that it entitles this limited segment of the hunting population to special privileges such as setting their own deer seasons and bag limits. Especially when they attempt to cancel the archery season. If anyone puts forth legislation, which will cut into or abolish the archery season, they had better figure on a war, a real nasty, bitter range war. That would be a shame, it would certainly hurt hunting.

Perhaps there is a better solution, one which would work for everyone. In the musical Oklahoma there was a song that said "Oh the cowboy and the farmer should be friends," and which went on to point out that they were dependent on each other. Ranchers and hunters in Texas are certainly mutually dependent. Hunters need ranchers to provide affordable hunting opportunities. Ranchers need hunters to support their operations and also to support pro hunting legislation. If there aren't enough hunters, we may see a time when hunting

seasons are voted closed by our legislatures. I feel that there is an obligation on all of us connected with hunting to work to preserve hunting for future generations. One way to do this is to provide more opportunities to hunt. I think a good way to do this is to expand the number of opportunities to bowhunt. Perhaps even increase the bowhunting season. Let me briefly suggest how this might be done.

Every year I make at least one trip to the Lincoln ranch in Webb County. The Lincoln is bowhunting only. This is my poor man's trophy hunt. I can't afford that \$4,000 package hunt on a high fenced QDM ranch, but I, like most hunters, can scrape up a few hundred dollars for a special hunt on the Lincoln. The ranch sets a 120 P & Y limit on bucks and there is a penalty for shooting anything smaller. While the ranch is not high fenced, between the size limit and being surrounded by other large ranches you stand a good chance of seeing a lot of deer and maybe even getting a shot at a real trophy.

This is a good deal for the middle class bowhunter,

but it's also a good deal for the ranch. The Lincoln makes a lot of money off of its bowhunters. It also provides a lot of hunting opportunities. This five thousand acre ranch allows sixteen people a day to hunt. Better yet it can sustain a high level of hunting from October to mid January. Bowhunting increases hunting opportunities and ranch revenues. If high fence ranches need more revenues and more time to harvest management bucks I feel the answer is not to eliminate the October bow season, but rather to open the ranch to bowhunters. It would require more work, but would be good for all concerned.

Perhaps an even better idea would be to extend the archery season. What about starting bowhunting on September 15th, or even September 1st? Many ranches could benefit from this extended season in which they could offer many more relatively inexpensive deer hunts (both management and trophy). More hunters, more hunting opportunities, more management time and more ranch revenues, everyone would benefit.

Before a range war gets started remember "the cowboy and the farmer should be friends". Perhaps another historical saying might be in order as



well. I forget who said it, but it went something like "We should all hang together or we most assuredly will all hang separately.". The anti-hunters will not go away. We need unity, not division. We need more hunters and hunting opportunities, better game management, and more money for quality deer management. Rather than destroying the archery season and privatizing the deer herd I think this is a better way to go.

Editor's note: Tomme Actkinson is the current president of the state hunting organization, Lone Star Bowhunters Association.

Bowhunter Backlash!

By Michael Middleton

As referenced in LSBA president, Tomme Actkinson's remarks above, many bowhunters have taken exception to the Publisher's Letter in this month's issue of The Journal of the Texas Trophy Hunter, in which Jerry Johnston, president and founder of that organization, commented that "landowners with intensely

managed high fence prototypes need the month of October to harvest all their surplus deer," and "why not open the hunting season for all landowners, high fenced or not on the Saturday nearest October 1st?" You may read the entire article in The Journal of the Texas Trophy Hunter, or view it online at Texas Trophy Hunter's website at www.ttha.com.

It didn't take long for bowhunters to react, via letters to Mr. Johnston and comments on bowhunting discussion forums. I, too, sent a letter to Mr. Johnston, asking him to clarify his position, and allowing him an opportunity to respond to the letters he received, some of which were somewhat scathing, in this issue of the TexasBowhunter's Journal. Following is the letter that Mr. Johnston sent to me in response the concerns of bowhunters:

Michael,

Rather than fence with the bowhunters that e-mailed me with erroneous statements, let me make an attempt to clarify my position. You are right, I

am not an active bowhunter. I once was at a very young age, a traditional archer because I was fascinated with Indians and Indian lore. I am still an Indian Artifact Collector. I have over 4000 points in my collection and I am also an accomplished flint napper. My point is I am not against bowhunters nor do I have any desire to shut down the bow season. I think I made it very clear that I made a mistake when I said why not open the season for all landowners in October. Very plainly, it never occurred to me that bowhunting was a conflict in my statement.

I feel that the Texas Trophy Hunters has given a lot in support to bowhunting. We have a bowhunting only head competition division at our Hunters Extravaganza and for a while gave a booth to the L.S.B.A. We have a regular section for bowhunting in our publication and will continue to even after the unkind word I have received by e-mail.

As an outsider looking in, I am confused with the seemingly on going friction among the bowhunting community. Things like the crossbow and draw lock issues are beyond my understanding in terms of disagreements. To me, if you're going to be holistic, you should go all the way. I'm

sure there was a time in history when compound bows were thought to be unfair.

I read somewhere once that Sitting Bull gave his troubled grandson who had a problem in life this advise...

“My son, if your eyes are ever to see what that of the eye of the eagle sees, you must raise your head above that of a gopher.”

Michael, hunting is in trouble. My lively hood as well as my passion for hunting are in jeopardy. Why? There are many, many reasons why, but one very important reason is that hunting is no longer a way of life like it once was. Folks don't grow up with it like they used to. Larger ranches are being fragmented and then fragmented again. The country kids move to the city and raise their kids on computers, TV and video games. They have little or no exposure to the outdoors. A major crusade is needed, and quickly to offer a connection to the outdoors, and hunting. We must all work together to make that happen.

Some folks are confused when they say hunting is expensive, trophy hunting is expensive, but hunting is not. The TTHA, TWA and T.D.A. (Texas Deer Association) are working to try and turn this around in terms of the cost of deer hunting. As I mentioned in the Publishers Letter, there are more and more smaller ranches going under high fence and landowners are managing for high end Trophy bucks, but there will always be many, many more low end or what we call management bucks. Even now, there are so many that we often give the hunts away to first time hunters. There is a management movement in place as we speak called “Operation 1000.” There are many, many dedicated small ranch owners who intensely manage for quality, that are willing to give 10% of their buck and doe harvest to TPWD to add to their Grand Slam Lotto. The TDA hopes to gather up 1000 FREE hunts, from its membership, and it can happen!
I truly believe this idea will gain movement, not to mention that the cost of management bucks will be very reasonable because there are so many

available, and more to come. Now to me, that is putting your money where your mouth is. I ask who else will join in? Read my article one more time. We're going no where fast if hunters don't stop cutting each other down over personal ethics. It's way passed time to be united!

You will see in print next issue what I promised. Thanks for your time and interest on my side of this issue.

Respectfully,

Jerry Johnston
President and Founder
Texas Trophy Hunters
Association

I'd like to thank Mr. Johnston for his response, and I look forward to reading his comments in the next issue of his magazine. I'd like to hear your comments about this issue at the TexasBowhunter.com Discussion Forum, or via email at journal@texasbowhunter.com



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ARCTIC CAT FOR \$20 BUCKS?!



Would you like to have a new Arctic Cat ATV for as little as \$20? Well, here is your chance. We have an Arctic Cat 300, 4X4 that we are raffling for the family of Ty Brumfield. Ty drowned in a tragic bowfishing accident, along with his good friend Ed Foreman, on February 13, 2000. Ty was 35 years old and left his wife Gina and two young boys, Ty Shane, age 11, and Ryan Gates, age 5. The Arctic Cat has fully independent suspension on all 4 wheels, and selectable 2-wheel drive or 4-wheel drive.

This 4x4 ATV is made in the USA. It has more ground clearance than any other ATV in it's class and a smoother ride. For the full specifications see the link above or go to www.arctic-cat.com and follow the links to the 300 4X4.

The tickets are \$20 each or 6 for \$100. Send a check or money order to: Gina Brumfield, Rt. 1 Box 450604, Sulphur Springs, TX 75482. We will mail your ticket stub(s) and notify the winner. You can e-mail me if you wish, and I will answer all your questions. The winner must be 18 years old. If it is agreeable with your local Arctic Cat dealer, it may be possible to pick up the ATV from them.

Thanks for your support for this very worthy cause. Keith Latimer

Was it a success?

By Glenn Lemke

How do you judge one successful hunt from another? How many times during the days following a hunting trip are you asked, "Did you have any success? Did you kill one?" For most hunters and fishermen, myself included, the success of that hunting or fishing trip is too often based on whether we bagged that whitetail or caught a limit of trout. We tend to forget that there are many other factors that make that trip a successful one.

Recently, I embarked on one of those lifetime adventures that are not readily available to most of us on a regular basis. Taking an elk with my bow has been a dream for some time and only recently did I have the opportunity to try to make that dream come true. The Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation has a large Texas following and each year the various chapters hold banquets to raise money to help support the Foundation.

Many outfitters from across the nation donate hunts to be auctioned off at these functions. I was able to secure one of these hunts last spring and I began to make plans and arrangements for my dream hunt. The following is my account of that nine-day hunt in the Beaverhead area of Montana, the preparation that went into it, and the successful outcome.

My hunt was arranged with Thunderbow Outfitters of Swan Valley, Montana. Mike Robinson is the owner and top guide for the operation and I made contact with Mike in early March to see what I would need to do. He let me know that it was necessary for me to quickly apply for my non-resident license and tags. The deadline was right around the corner, but he told me he was on his way to Texas for a hunting show and he would personally bring me all the necessary paperwork. I really appreciated this move on his part because it gave me an opportunity to meet him prior to the actual hunt. After meeting Mike, securing the paperwork and sending in my \$800 for a guaranteed non-resident license, I felt

pretty good about this adventure. We locked in dates. Many "old" elk hunters told me that I had the best week for the rut and bugling activity. I would be headed for Montana on September 20th. I made contact with a travel agent in Missoula, Montana, and arranged air transportation. I got information about bringing meat and horns back with high anticipation. My next step in the process was determining what to take and what not to take and preparing my somewhat out of shape body for the mountain hunt. I read every bowhunting article I could get hold of. I rented and purchased videos from Realtree, Carlton, Knight and Hale, and watched the Outdoor channel. I ordered calls from Carlton, new camo from Cabela's, and new boots from BassPro Shops. The expense bill just kept getting bigger and I was still nearly three months away!

It was a good thing that I had long distance coverage on my mobile and that Mike had a mobile. It was very difficult to get in touch with him during the summer because of his float trips, rafting trips, and pack trips. Man what a life! We were able to communicate and I found out that my hunting partner would be a young man named Dudley



Primeaux, from Elgin, Texas. Through email and the telephone, Dudley and I quickly became friends. We shared the fact that neither of us had ever been elk hunting before. I spent the better part of August shooting and tuning my two bows, purchasing new arrows, new broadheads, and whatever else new I could find. It didn't seem like I could go in Academy without spending a \$100 on elk hunting stuff! My wife just kept tabs and kept reminding me of the new clothes she had to have and that there was a jewelry show coming up in October. I just smiled because I knew that the Texas Trophy Hunters show was in late August and there was lots of elk stuff there!

Most airlines are restrictive of the number of pieces of luggage you are allowed. Delta is no exception. I knew that one piece had to be my double bow case and so the other had to be large enough to carry all of my gear and clothing for nine days. I purchased a special outfitter duffel at the hunting show and it proved one of my most valuable finds. I packed and repacked that duffel at

least twenty five times in the course of a month. There was always something else that needed to go along or so I thought. As the days grew closer to departure time, I began to get that itch that's always been there shortly before I leave for a hunt. My excitement was growing as the minutes ticked away. It was hard to sleep on Sunday night, as I was ready to board that plane and fly 1500 miles in search of a trophy bull. Arriving at Houston International on Monday morning, I must have at least looked the part of a hunter because the sky cabbie asked "mulies or elk?" Oh, it felt great! I kissed my bride goodbye and proceeded to find that big jet. I was finally on my way to the "Big Sky Country", as the state of Montana is known. My first leg of the adventure was to stop in Salt Lake City for a change in planes and to meet up with my hunting partner, Dudley Primeaux. As I exited the plane I began to look for someone who might fit the description of what I had imagined Dudley would look like. I soon spotted an individual who definitely fit my image of the other Texan. It did not take long

for the two of us to get acquainted and get down to the subject at hand, hunting elk.



Dudley Primeaux of Elgin, Texas.

Our plan was to arrive in Missoula on Monday afternoon, spend the night there and be picked up early on Tuesday morning to be taken into our hunting area. We were picked up at the airport by a representative from the Red Ruby Inn and quickly began to enjoy the local hospitality of Montana. We decided to wait until after dinner to make contact with Mike, as we figured he would be busy getting ready for us. We were assured that we would be picked up early the next morning. Once again it was a sleepless night with thoughts of expectations of the next day. The morning arrived; noon arrived, but no outfitter. Mike finally rolled in around 3:30. We soon found out that he had spent the better part of the night and all morning gathering packhorses that had broken out at his place in the Swan Valley. We had a two-hour trip ahead of us to the

trailhead. The varied scenery over the 90 plus miles can be described only as beautiful and breathtaking. We arrived at trailhead leading into the Beaverhead Wilderness area around 5:00. It would be dark when we would finally reach camp.



Guide & Wrangler "SHANE"
Camp dog "OSO NEGRO" at
Trail head

Our camp consisted of a large sleeping tent for the hunters, a large cook tent, and two smaller tents for the guides and cook was tucked away on a rise at the far end of meadow. A small mountain stream, which served as our cooler, flowed near by. Two other hunters, one from Montana and the other from

Wyoming greeted us. After our evening meal, Mike held a planning session for the next day. He talked about how and where we would be hunting. Most of our hunting would be of the "talking and walkin" variety, but that there were tree stands available if we choose that option. Mike then started checking all of our licenses and tags. Guess what? I did not have a Montana archery stamp. This indeed did create a problem and the only option was to ride back out the next day, and go into a small community nearby to try to secure a stamp. Plans were made for Shane and me to leave at noon the following day. Dudley and I would hunt day 1 with Mike and then that afternoon I would hunt with Shane. If we were back in time!

My first night was not very comfortable. Not only did I worry about not having my stamp, which by the way was not my fault, but also I nearly froze. I had purchased a new low temperature bag with a good liner, but soon learned that the secret of staying warm at night was using horse blankets between your bag and the cot. Worked like a charm!

The small wood heater did an exceptional job of warming the large tent. The only problem was that after several hours it was out and nobody wanted to leave their bags to stroke it. Each morning it was a challenge to see who had to get up first to use the bathroom. It remained their chore to start the fire. It goes without question that we used a lot of starter fuel during those eight days. Nighttime temperatures were in the low 20's, but by get up time it was always in the teens.



DAY 1

The mornings would set the stage for our entire day. During breakfast it was decided how long we would hunt and what area we would be going into. Our daypacks were loaded with lunches, snacks, and drinks, along with all of the other items I was told were essential to carry in the mountains. I was using a Rancho Safari Cat III pack. With my arrows and all of my other goodies, I was carrying

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about 20 pounds in addition to my heavy compound. I took two bows along; my primary was a Buckmaster and my backup, a Ben Pearson King Cobra. Both were set at 72# and have the same sights and rests. My arrows were GoldTip 5575's tipped with GoldTip Gladiator 100's.

The first morning found Mike, Dudley, and myself stayed in the lower drainages. We would move from drainage to drainage, calling from the base one time and then moving to the top to call at the edge of the dark timber. We covered about ten miles the first morning without hearing or sighting animals. There was a tremendous amount of sign present in almost every area that we explored. We returned to camp at noon for lunch. Shane and I set off for the trailhead to obtain an archery stamp. Our hopes were that we would find one in the small town of Polaris near the Maverick Mountain Ski Area. Nothing was available there and that left only one other prospect, drive into Dillon and hope that we could fine one there. After several stops we were directed to a farm supply. I was told that I

could only get a stamp if I could show proof of having taken the Montana bowhunting safety course or one from my home state. I had neither. After explaining my situation, the young female clerk stated that she knew the local game warden and would make a call. He explained that Montana law stated that if I had held a license for the previous year I would not need the course. So for the fee of \$10 I purchased a 1998 Montana Nonresident license and had my stamp to boot!

We grabbed a burger and headed back with the hopes of reaching camp in time to hunt the last hour of light. It was dark when we reached camp, but did see several good mulies on the way in. The other hunters had not scored, but had seen several groups of cows. After a great evening meal, a few brews, sleep came easy.

DAY 2

At breakfast it was decided that I would team up with Shane and we would head for a drainage that had not been visited this season. It would be about a five-mile hike, but from the topo map it looked like an easy

walk. What the topos never show are the blow downs. The last mile or so was like picking your way through giant pick up sticks in the dark. We had heard cows several times in the areas ahead of us and it helped make the trek easier. We were in place by first light and started calling. After a long hour and no response it was decided that we would head over the ridge into the next valley where Shane had found a wallow earlier. That ridge turned into an 8000 ft climb that found this old man huffing and puffing. The trip down proved tougher than the one up. Rough with lots of fallen timber. The wallow had been used recently and we decided that we would set up and spend the remainder of the day doing the waiting game. Wait it was, with the only thing visiting the wallow were an assortment of Montana bird life. The long hike to camp was through open meadows where in many places it was like walking on a waterbed. Several times in the dark I broke through and ended up in mud and water up to my knees. It was on these dark hikes to and from camp that my faith in the compass and my GPS were renewed.

DAY 3

It was now the third day into my adventure and I had adapted well to the altitude. I



had really worried that I would not be in good enough physical shape to enjoy this hunt, but found that even the modest amount of exercising I had done during the summer had helped. During my summer vacation to Port Isabel I had used the old Tarpon stadium to do stands in almost every afternoon. This had really made a difference.

Following a big breakfast, which included every thing from bloody marys to ham, eggs, and pancakes, we decided to follow a small mountain stream up into a high drainage. It was good light by the time we reached an area where the climb became fairly steep, but still open. As we started up, two cows broke out ahead and crossed, both unaware of our presence. Almost as sudden, a spike, followed by a nice six by six, took the same trail as the cows. Our plans changed. We were off, up into the dark timber, on an effort to intercept these animals as they crossed the ridge above. Shane knew the area well and felt that if they stayed true to the trail we could easily be in position for a shot. We quickly (If a 230lb, 53 year

old can move quickly!) made the top and set up. The wind was in our faces. Shane gave a few mews on his call and as predicted the two cows came up the trail not 30 yards distant. My heart was in my throat as excitement swelled. I knew any minute the two bulls would be along. The cows passed without the slightest knowledge that we were there. Now we needed bulls! They say you cannot predict what animals with love on their minds will do. In this case they simply disappeared into thin air. We never saw or even heard these two bulls again. No amount of calling could entice a response. We continued on, hitting several other drainages before deciding to head back to camp for lunch.

Our afternoon hunt focused on an area not more than a mile from camp. Dudley would hunt with us for the next several hunts due to the fact that Mike had to go into Dillon to take care of personal business. Shane had scouted this area and knew that there were at least three wallows in very close together. Our plans were to hit each wallow, call and

wait. We would give each of the areas about an hour and a half. Shane considered the last one our best bet and wanted to hit it at dark. This hunt was a little different in that the weather had started to change and we were going into some very thick timber with lots of blow downs. It had become overcast and windy, with flurries of rain, snow, and fog. Great hunting weather! We found more sign in this one area than anywhere we had been. The wallows had been worked, there were fresh tracks and droppings, but most impressive were the rubs. There were rubs everywhere, but one area above a deep canyon was unbelievable. I followed a rub line for over two hundred yards and counted no less than fifty fresh rubs. Some made by small bulls, but many on trees as thick as six inches and as much as five to six foot up. There were some big bulls working here, but hitting them at the right time was the question. It was decided that we would try hunting this spot from lock on tree stands the next afternoon.

We continued down into the adjoining canyon and up the far side to a very large wallow. The odor of elk was strong in the air and from the tracks it looked as if we had missed an elk or two by minutes.



“Lots of sign!”
A good wallow

The wind was swirling from almost every direction, but there was confidence in the air. As darkness approached, we could hear elk moving in the timber around us and several times we caught sight of movement, but could not coax anything within bow range. It was another frustrating, but great day in the high country.

It was now dark and another adventure was about to unfold. The hike to this wallow had been for the most part downhill, but that climb down the canyon wall had been steep, slippery, and very

rough, Shane felt an easier way was to hit the drainage at the bottom and follow it out to the main trail leading back into camp. The GPS showed us to be about ¾ mile from camp and about 1 mile from the trail. Shane assured us it was easier and safer to follow the stream. Wrong! Trying to negotiate the bogs, blow downs, car size boulders, and thick underbrush with mini-mag lights proved to be a real task. The one-mile ended up being more like five or six. When we finally broke out into an open meadow, I said a little prayer. It was a wonder that worse thing that had happened was a few scratches. Camp was a welcome sight, as was the hot meal and warm tent and cot.

DAY 4

The temperature had dropped overnight and we awoke to a crisp, windless day. Our plans for day 4 were to do some spot and stalk in an adjoining valley. Once again we would cover a lot of ground, do a lot of climbing, but saw or heard no elk. At one spot I found a good tree to sit against while Shane moved downwind of me to call. I was wearing ScentLoc 3D

camo and disappeared into the terrain pretty good. I heard movement and watched in amazement as a large wolverine started toward my location walking atop a blowdown. He did not see me until he was about six feet away. He wasn't sure what to do and neither was I. He slowly put it in reverse, walked backwards for little ways and then very quickly changed ends and exited. It was exciting, but I was glad he was gone. I've read stories of the damage they can inflict. We spent the entire day hunting with no luck, but lots of great memories. When we returned to camp we found that one of the hunters had taken a cow and that they were still in the process of bringing it out. It proved to be a smaller than usual, but still took two pack animals. We stayed up fairly late, sharing stories and telling lies. In four days of hunting not a single animal had responded to calls, nor had anyone heard any bulging. Sleep came easy.

DAY 5

More of the same, except today I would hunt with Mike. Shane had to make a trip to the trailhead to takeout some of the gear we would not be using. It was also decided that he would go in and put up two tree stands in the area that we had found all of the rubs in.

Dudley and I had decided we wanted to try this for day 6. Mike and I covered more country on this day than any previous hunt. We stopped only for short breaks and for lunch. The rest of the day was spent “walkin n talking” and doing a lot of glassing. We spotted several small groups of cows, but failed to produce. Several mulie does and small bucks were also seen. There was still no answering of our calling. My GPS showed that we had covered close to twenty miles on day 5. It really did not seem like we had gone that far, but once again sleep came easy.

DAY 6

We awoke to a new cold front with occasional blowing snow. Dudley and I pulled out the cold weather gear and got ready for time in our tree stands. There was high anticipation on this morning as our thoughts went back to the day we had found all of the rubs. Shane joined us for a cup of coffee and shared that he had found fresh sign yesterday while putting the stands up. He had marked the trail in and gave us the GPS coordinates to the stands. Dudley and I stroke out on our own. By using

my GPS, compass, flashlight, and the marking tape we found the stands with time to spare. It did not take long for the teen temperatures to soak in and by 9:30 I was nearly frozen to death. I had seen a lone mulie doe as she walked down the mountain. As I approached Dudley’s stand I noticed that he too had vacated the stand in order to huddle under some low trees. He was also ready for something hot. We returned to camp for lunch and a warm shower. By midday the temperature had risen into the 40’s and the sun was high in a clear sky. We decided to try our luck at grouse hunting after lunch. We found several within easy walking distance of camp. The first three were dispatched easily, but number four proved a costly endeavor. My first shot missed as the bird sat on the ground not ten yards away, the arrow had hit a limb and broke. The grouse flew into a low tree and simply sat there as I threw two more carbons at her and Dudley let loose several from his recurve. That fool hen is still probably wondering what those fools were doing. The final score: lost arrows 5, grouse 0.

The afternoon in the tree stands was somewhat more endurable, but it was still extremely cold. I still have not figured out how those guys up north whitetail hunt in freezing weather with a foot of snow on the ground. The wind began to pick up considerably near dark and lots of timber starting falling all around us. It was amazing to see a sixty or seventy foot lodge pine break at its base and crash to the ground. I really began to think about what I would be doing if I were at elk. I definitely would not have been on this mountain. There were none!

DAY 7

Time was running out and no one had an answer for where to go or how to do it. Mike stated that in all of his years of guiding this was one of the few times he had no response to calling or had not had elk bugle during this prime time of the season. Shane and I headed off again to hit some of the same drainages we had tried earlier in the week. We did a lot of walking and looking along with a good share of calling. It was hard to believe that all of the elk that were leaving sign could simply disappear. We headed into the dark timber around noon in hopes of at least jumping something. We found hundreds of trails with fresh tracks and droppings, but



no live elk! Toward dark we came out of the timber near a wallow and decided to set up and finish out the day there. Shane's first series of calls immediately received a response. The response came from not over two or three hundred yards away. My heart pounded as Shane gave me a thumbs up. He would call and the bull would answer. Suddenly a second bull answered from the other side of the meadow. Both were moving toward us. Then just as I began to position myself for a shot, both "bulls" came out into the meadow. The bulls turned out to be MIKE and TIM, the other guide! Talk about highs and lows! Oh well, at least I thought I had heard a real live elk. The other two parties thought they were working their way toward a bull also. We all had some good laughs around the fire that night.

DAY 8

I think Mike began to feel a little guilty for how the previous days had turned out, but we assured him that we knew he and his people were working hard to help us score. This was hunting and we need to remember that killing an animal is not necessarily

the standard of a successful hunt. Mike decided to take Dudley and I to an area that had not been hunted by any of his parties in the last several years. We headed back toward the trailhead and after an easy mile hike headed toward the Maverick Mountain Ski area. He told us of the numerous fingers and meadows that sprouted from this mountain and just maybe we could find a lost elk in there. Once again we spent a fruitless day, but almost got several shots at mulies. One of which could have been a P&Y. We returned to camp tired, but satisfied that we had all put out 100% plus over the past eight days in our search for a trophy.



Mulies

DAY 9

We began to break camp early in order to get back to Missoula by midafternoon. The long horseback ride down to the

trailhead seemed a lot longer going out and ending my hunt than on the way in nine days ago. At the trailhead we unloaded packhorses and loaded pickups. We said our goodbyes. Tim and Shane headed back into the wilderness to retrieve the remainder of camp and to leave the site as they had found it. Dudley and I headed to Missoula to catch our flight home.

Was this trip a success? You decide. For me it will be in my memory banks until I die and it only set the stage for a return bout into the "Big Sky Country".



"Big Sky Country"

Montana Elk in Colorado

By Paul Schwander

The year started out great. I had purchased a guided elk hunt for Montana last year at the Austin Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation banquet, and could not wait for an opportunity to hunt in Montana, a goal that I have had since a little kid. Just as soon as my goal seemed to be within reach, reality struck. I was not going to be able to get enough days off to go. I had to sell the hunt. Thanks Glenn. I would, however, have enough days to go to Colorado. So, with that in mind, I purchased another hunt at the Beaumont banquet with Dayson Goetz, of D bar G Outfitters, out of Durango, Colorado. (Being a district chair for the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, I have the opportunity to attend a lot of the big game banquets around the state. If you have never attended one, I would highly recommend you do. Most of the banquets are family oriented and are set up to appeal to a wide variety of interests, not just elk.) I was not familiar with

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Dayson, but with a little research and a couple of phone calls to friends in the Durango area, was quite pleased with what I had found. I would also have the opportunity to visit Dayson and the hunting area while on vacation during August.

As it turned out, I was able to meet Dayson, and one of his guides, along with his cook, on a horseback ride across the ranch and the surrounding DOW land. On the ride, not only did I find the area very conducive to elk habitat, but also surveyed that, together with the oak brush and hills, this was going to be a very physical hunt. Also, Dayson and his staff were going to be a pleasure to be around.

As the day to leave approached, preparation became extremely time consuming. The thought of leaving some minute, but needed, piece of equipment engulfed my every thought. But looking at the mountain of clothes, equipment and other assorted gear in a pile by the door, one would think I was off to conquer some exotic, foreign land. Not to mention my hunting partner was about to drive

me crazy. How many of you have had to deal with a hunting partner wanting to take his 200 pound mutt to elk camp with them? But, with a place to keep the dog secured while we were gone (my wife volunteered, so that I could maintain my sanity), things settled down during the last week of preparation.

The hunt was to be for five days. We would be leaving on Wednesday before Labor Day, arrive in Durango on Thursday morning and start hunting on Friday. The trip basically went as planned, except that I decided to make the trip with a hunting partner that could not drive at night, so I drove basically from Dayton to Albuquerque (the dumb bunch and Maggie Magee was starting to haunt my memory!) We arrived at a friend's hours just south of Durango at about 9:00 am, for a quick shower before going up to the camp. After a refreshing shower, and being recruited to help with the installation of cabinets in the bathroom, we headed for town to buy our tags and managed to reach the ranch on Thursday afternoon at about 2:00 pm. Our cook greeted us with a huge pan of lasagna for lunch. What a rough hunt this was going to be! After lunch, and a short nap to get rid of the road blindness, we took time to shoot our bows and make

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sure our equipment was in order for the next morning. With another great meal for dinner, I turned in early to dream of the huge 7x7 that would soon adorn my den wall.

Finally, the day was here. The morning we had been waiting on started at about 3:30 am. Breakfast in the cook tent at 4:00, then a two-hour wait for daylight. We would be hunting on the ranch close to camp on the first morning. There were quite a few elk holding in the draws and oak brush within a mile of the camp, and we did not want to take a chance of running them out before daylight.

We eased out onto a ridge just as daylight was breaking. I glassed over the two, mile long draws that came together just below. It looked like the first morning's strategy would be the right decision. There were no less than 15 cows grazing on the side of the hill of the second draw over. As I glassed the cows, a big 6x6 came up out of the draw pushing one of the cows in front of him. As I watched, he began running cows all over the side of the other ridge. He was

hot and it was time to move. The draws were deep and steep. Tow hundred to three hundred feet deep, and five hundred yards wide at the top. So it was not going to be a quick jaunt, and the thick oak brush was not going to make it any easier. It took about 30 minutes to get to the top of the middle ridge in between the two draws. The bull as still running cows out in front of us. As I eased down into the draw, the bull ran a cow about a half-mile up the draw. The cows were starting to head back down into the draw, making the going a little bit slower for fear of blowing the whole bunch out. They seemed to be heading for a pond about a quarter of a mile up the draw. As I eased toward the pond, the hair on the back of my neck stood on end as the bull let out a perfect bugle with a full chuckle at the end. As I got closer to the pond, I could hear the bull splashing around. At the time, I didn't know it, but there were two trails into the pond. One went straight to it; the other went down into the draw, then up to the pond. I wound up on the wrong one. The one down in the draw. No way to get there

without the bull seeing me or blowing the cows out. As I started back up to the other trail, the bull bugled again and ran a spike off up the ridge with two cows out in front of him. He was gone for the morning. As I walked around the pond, I decided that this would be the place for the afternoon's hunt. There was a good ledge about 12 feet above the pond that would be perfect for an ambush.

I left camp about 2:00 pm for the two-mile hike back to the pond. I reached the pond about 3:15. It was very hot and I was soaked in sweat. But the wind and the thermals were on my side, and it did not look like scent would be a problem. About 4:30, I cow chirped a couple of times and almost immediately a yearling cow ran down the wash on my left side and jumped in the water for a drink and looked for the cow she had heard. She milled around for a few minutes and then returned from the direction she had come. For the next hour and a half, I was nothing. I tried chirping a little about every thirty minutes but nothing was happening. At about 6:15, I spotted a mule deer doe feeding on the side of the hill about 100 yards away, straight across the draw from where I was sitting. I watched her for the next hour or so with no elk



to be seen. A little after seven, I noticed another doe about 200 yards further up the draw. While watching the doe, I noticed an elk coming down the hill about 300 yards on the other side of the doe. I saw that it was a bull, so I chirped a couple of times and the bull stopped in his tracks. I glassed and saw it was not the big bull I was looking for, but it was probably a legal bull. I chirped a couple of more times and the bull hit it on a dead run down the draw. It took him less than a minute to cover the ground between us. He busted out of the brush at the pond just below and then seemed to relax and started grazing. He was a 4x5, certainly not the big one, but definitely a shooter for my first elk with a bow. There was not much time before dark, but he did not give me a shot opportunity right off. He grazed towards me, never turning broadside for 5 minutes. Finally, he turned towards the pond. At 10 yards, he finally gave me a good broadside shot. The arrow hit him about midway back in the chest cavity, he whirled and started back the way he came, but stopped after only about 15 yards. He then turned and

started walking up the wash beside me. I did not see an exit hole, so my only thought was to get another arrow into him. At thirty yards, I chirped to try to stop him but he continued to walk up the hill, so I let loose and the arrow missed just under his chest. He went another 15 yards and stopped, turned around and faced the pond at 40 yards from me. I thought I could see my red fletching sticking out of his side with just a trickle of blood. I was still anxious to get another arrow into him. If he got into the oak brush with no blood trail to speak of he would be impossible to find at night. At 40 yards, I did not have a clear shot, so some how I would have to go get him.

Watching the elk, I could tell he was hit pretty hard. He was definitely disoriented. This went on for about five minutes. Finally, it was starting to get dark and the elk turned for the brush. I chirped and stopped him momentarily, but then he continued to walk. Well, it was time to move. I picked up my bow and bailed out of my makeshift blind. I eased down to the pond and then started across the wash in the elk's direction. I had not gone twenty yards from the pond when I heard a cow chirp behind me. I turned only to see a cow running down the hill to the pond with the big 6x6 hot on her trail. "Well shoot!" (Plus a few other choice words!) Nothing I could do now, so I turned my attention back to my bull. I walked the rest of the way



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across the wash to the edge of the bush and could see that my bull was down about 10 yards in front of me. He still had his head up, but I could tell he was not going anywhere. So my next thought was to get back to the camp and get the horses and return. As I turned back toward the pond, there was the big bull at the edge of the pond getting a drink. I walked all the way down to the pond, not 20 yards from him, and he just watched me. I climbed up to my blind and collected my gear, turned around to look at the bull and he was just strolling off without a care in the world. This was really a tremendous bull. He was not extremely wide, but he was tall with at least 20-inch eye guards and lots of mass. I could have been miserable over my decision to shoot the smaller bull, but who is to say the big boy would have ever given me a shot opportunity? I was finally successful taking my first elk with a bow, not to mention the 200+ pounds of good eating I would be taking home, so it was back to camp. We returned later that evening to gut, skin, quarter and hang the meat. We came back the next morning to

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retrieved the elk on horseback.

As it turned out, I was to see the big 6x6 and a huge 5x5 several times over the next four days of hunting, but I was back to doing what I love best, chasing big deer. But that's another story! You can bet next year I will be hunting the same area and a little more patience will be involved!

Dayson and his crew were outstanding hosts. He ran a full-service camp, which included all meals, lodging, cabin tents, guides on the ranch, if wanted, and plenty of adult beverages, after hunting hours, of course. Dayson and his guide are both bowhunters, and enjoy catering to such. The ranch and the surrounding DOW land hold a tremendous amount of elk during the fall of the year. It was not uncommon to see 15 to 20 cows and 2 to 3 bulls an outing. After I killed my elk I spent most of my time in the river bottom chasing three nice bucks that hung out there and I was even seeing elk there, where there were not supposed to be any. Also, the ranch is home to a large number of Black

Bear. While hunting during the week, I was the only one who did not have a very close encounter with one of the local bruins. And by close, I mean bow-length away! As my hunting partner said, it gave new meaning to the phrase "reach out and touch someone!"

If you are interested in more information about D bar G, you can visit their website at www.sportsmansdread.com/dbarg/, or if interested in more information about the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation in your area, please feel free to email me at pschwand@dayton.isd.esc4.net.

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Optics: What is best for you?

By Kevin Johnson

This is a very personal issue and differs greatly dependent on individual hunting styles. You hear the blanket statement, “spend all you can afford, then spend a little more,” and while this will get you great glass, it might get you more than you really need.

The first step is a careful needs assessment. There are 3 main criteria in the choosing of optics. They are owner treatment, length of usage, and type of hunting.

First thing that needs to be assessed is owner treatment. This may not seem important in the choosing of optics but it is, as this is what determines how you will choose the durability options. Do you treat your hunting equipment like eggs or tools? There are 3 options that are available in binoculars that are answered here, weatherproofing, shockproofing and warranty. If you only use your binoculars in perfect weather and the loss of the use of optics will not ruin your trip, then 100% waterproof binoculars may not be necessary. Do you keep your

binoculars in your pack safe and protected? Do you keep them around your neck? Do you just throw them in your truck/pack? Based upon these answers you may decide that you need a pair that is 1) Disposable, 2) Shockproof, or neither. Personally, I hunt/scout in any weather with my binoculars around my neck, but pack them carefully otherwise. This means that shockproof and 100% waterproof is a must. If you are so hard on binoculars that nothing will last, you may need to go with “disposable” binoculars that cost less than \$50, or change how rough you are on your optics. The warranty issue is more secondary to all the other options to me; however, with the higher quality optics 25+ years is normal.

Length of usage is where we evaluate the quality of the optics that is needed. This is a double-edged question. It both asks how long do you use your optics in one sitting and how long do you plan on keeping your optics. If you are plan on buying optics yearly, then unless you have deep pockets, you will be trapped into buying inexpensive optics. If you plan on buying high quality, higher priced optics that you want to keep around for a while, you need to look at the adjustability. You have no idea what changes your eyes will endure in the future and

need binoculars that will accommodate glasses as well as changes in pupil diopter strength. The quality of the optics plays directly into how long you use them in a session. The longer you use the binoculars, the greater the impact of eyestrain is. High quality lenses and prisms along with multi-coated and phase corrected optics will deliver an image that is so clear you can glass comfortably for hours without any eyestrain. This means no headaches or eye aches. If you only use your binoculars to quickly glance at objects, then the necessity for optics of the highest quality may not be necessary.

The last criterion that is valuable in the choosing of optics is the style of hunting. This affects the binocular style as well as the light transmission. If you are going to carry the binoculars in your daypack, then weight is not a concern and the older Porro-Prism designs will work. This will also negate the need to have the optics “Phase Corrected”. If you want lightweight binoculars, then Roof-Prism binoculars are the way to go. But to get the sharpest possible image with this type of binocular you need phase coated prisms. This is because of the design of Roof-Prism binoculars. You will also need to decide what power you need as well as the objective. High power (10x+) are more difficult to hold still, and are heavy, but allow for longer range observation, low power are lighter and more steady. Large objectives (42mm+) allow more light in, but you pay for this in



weight. Small objectives are lighter but let in less light. This leads us into our next decision. How much do you care about seeing the first and last 30min of daylight? Do you care about telling if it is a deer, or differentiating between a yearling 6pt and a 5.5 year old 160+ class deer in the first and last 30min of light? These may seem like silly questions, but they are important. If you do not care about this, then the cheaper optics will be all you need; however, if this is information that you can't live without, then you will be paying for that information. The "Brightness" of the image is done in 2 ways. One is more light coming through. This is measured in

pupil diameter (power/objective a 10x50 would have a pupil diameter of 5mm). The other is more light being transmitted through the binoculars. This is achieved through lens/prism coatings, which are usually found in higher priced glass. The human eye can only dilate to 6mm, so anything beyond that is lost and, as the eye ages, it dilates less. This means that as you age you will need better quality binoculars to continue to see as well as you used to.

So, who makes the best binoculars? As you can see, it is all up to how you use the glass. Decide what you need, how much you can afford, then go try some out and you

make the call. Below you will find a table of roof-prism binoculars by options. I have not included the porro-prism, as they are not as popular and all brands are not included. Only the top 2 tiers are included because as you get further away from the top of the line binoculars, the tables get too large.

Waterproof, Shockresitant, Multicoated, Phase Corrected

Manufacturer	Warranty	Cost
Leica	Lifetime	\$800+
Swarovski	Lifetime	\$800+
Zeiss	Lifetime	\$430+
		(most \$700+)
Eagle Optics (Minox and Celestron)	Lifetime	\$388
Cabela Alaskan Guide (Celestron)	Not specified	\$500
Pentax DCFWP	25yr-Lifetime	\$400
	depending on point of purchase	

Waterproof, Shockresitant, Multicoated

Manufacturer	Warranty	Cost
Steiner	Lifetime	\$300+
Nikon Monarch ATB	25yr	\$240+
Eagle Optics	Lifetime	\$318+
Bushnell	25yr	\$300
Leupold	Lifetime	\$700
Burris	25yr	\$450

MY 1999 DEER SEASON

By Jeff Sendziaks

The year 1999 will go down as one of the toughest years my family and I have ever gone through. The spring of "99" started with my wife being hospitalized for nearly three full months with a complicated pregnancy. To make a long story short everything worked out well, and our fourth little bowhunter is as healthy as can be. With the arrival of our newest, I was unsure of exactly how much time I would be able to spend out hunting. I had already committed myself to another year of assistant coaching my son's football team. That alone would eliminate weekday hunts and Saturday mornings. At best, I could make the three hour drive and hunt Saturday evenings and Sundays until mid-November when our football season ended.

My lease is located in N/W Coleman County. We have a QDM program in place that allows us to harvest only mature bucks of 100"

or better. The lease is bow only and has plenty of whitetails and turkey roaming the area. Each hunter has his own area to maintain and hunt. My area is mostly flat and open, with some mesquites and a few post oaks. I run two feeders on the place year round, one on the north side and one on the south. I feed protein in the spring and early summer, and corn through the fall and winter. My goal in feeding year round is to offer a continuous food source and help the deer through the lean times, such as this past summer and fall. I also put out minerals to encourage antler and body growth, these seem to be very popular from late winter through early summer. I hunt mostly from the ground and opt to hunt trails leading to the feeders, rather than at them. I have yet to see a mature buck jump into a feed pen, but don't doubt that it happens.

October started off as usual, hot with lots of does and fawns visiting the feeders in the morning and late evening. I give the doe groups free range until the rut in hopes of them drawing in the bucks. And

this year it paid off big. My sightings of bucks increased tremendously. I actually had a number of hunts that produced more bucks than does. By mid-November pre rut activity was very noticeable, and bachelor groups had started to break up. I had a great opportunity to take a tremendous six point buck at this time, but the viewing of a photo had me believing that this deer was not a candidate for harvest. Big mistake, bad timing and not preparing for a shot got the best of me. There he was, 20 yards broadside and I was pinned down and couldn't move. Hunting from the ground and lack of cover prevented me from making something of the situation. It was at this time that I realized the photo didn't do the buck justice. I'm not talking about an ordinary six point either. This deer should make P&Y, no joke! The experience was thrilling nonetheless, for I shared it with my 9-year-old son. Just to hear the excitement in his voice and his labored breathing as the deer closed the distance to 20 yards, made the evening a success. To have an animal of that caliber at such close range was a memory he and I will soon never forget.

Thanksgiving break was right around the corner. Based on the previous season, I felt that



my opportunity to harvest a buck would come in the month of November with the rut, or not at all.

Thankfully, I found out that, what little family my wife and I have in the Great State of Texas, had all made out of town plans for the holidays.

Convincing my wife that our clan should spend the entire four days at the lease was easy. I am truly blessed in this area, for I have a great woman who lets me be a man. Though she is glad to see the deer season come to an end each year, she understands my passion for hunting and encourages me to pass my knowledge and experience onto our children.

The first three days of the Thanksgiving break brought plenty of deer sightings, including the big six point. Rutting activity was intense and pulling a mature deer from a doe was futile. I, personally, had never witnessed so much rutting activity in my entire life. The use of scents and rattling put many bucks in bow range. Some that would even make the 100" minimum required by our lease managers, but none that I felt had reached their true potential. One evening in

particular I had seven different bucks in bow range before seeing a single doe. When the does tried to approach the area, they were pursued relentlessly by the bucks who quickly abandoned feed in favor of a breeding opportunity.

The last morning of the long weekend brought cold temps and clear skies with a favorable wind to hunt my best stand. I slipped in well before sunrise in hopes that this would be the day. I had no sooner situated myself in the stand, when I could hear the unmistakable sound of a tree being destroyed by a buck. I clutched the bow with anticipation. A quick check of my equipment, all systems go! Now all I needed was the deer to make the final approach, and a little help from the sun. Then as quickly as it started, the commotion stopped, the silence was deafening. I stood motionless, hopeful that the buck would come into range and be all I had imagined. Suddenly the distinct sound of hooves hitting the ground startled me. There he was, he had just cleared the fence not 10 yards to my right. He was surely a mature deer,

his body size dwarfed any deer I had seen on the property as of yet. The only problem was I could see no antler. It was still too dark to make out the buck's rack. He stood there for a while sniffing the air. "Please don't wind me," I prayed. He pawed the ground then moved toward my main shooting lane. As he passed beneath the stand at a mere 12 feet, I strained my eyes to get a glimpse of an antler, it was still too dark. One last hope, as he walked from beneath the shadows of the trees. Nothing, I could see nothing. I watched in disbelief as the large bodied buck walked away in obvious pursuit of hot does. Within a few short minutes a sleek eight point buck approached with his nose to the ground. As he cross trailed the area in the early morning light, I became enraged. Though does, hogs and javelina had fallen to my bow and arrow, I had gone eight long years without harvesting a whitetail buck. I was bitter and soon found myself cussing the young deer to scare it off. My frustration grew from there. About 30 minutes had passed with no deer in sight. Then two does approached the fence. I prepared for a shot, if nothing else I was determined to bring home some venison. The first was obviously the younger of the two and I let her pass to wait on the larger, older doe. I

started my draw as she walked into the shooting lane and offered the perfect quartering-away shot. It seemed too easy, as the old saying goes, like shooting fish in a barrel. Nearly at full draw, I could already taste the back straps as I leaned forward to find my mark behind the front shoulder. Then, with my confidence nearly restored, the stand let out an awful “K-k-R-e-eeeeee-k”, . . . busted! Before I knew it, both does were looking me in the eye, flags up and off they went. I leaned back on the tree looking for a place to beat my head as I watched the two deer run off. With that I called it a day and headed to the house with my tail tucked firmly between my legs. At this time I felt my chance at harvesting a mature buck was over. I knew it would be two weeks before I could return to the lease and thought for sure the bucks would be long gone.

The next two weeks seemed to drag on forever. I practiced every chance I had, in anticipation of the next trip. I felt better about my shooting than I had in years, and new all that I needed was an opportunity. The anticipated weekend finally arrived and I over-

slept and missed the Saturday morning hunt. After having breakfast with the wife and kids, I made the 3-hour trip to the lease. I arrived in camp to cold northeast winds and light rain. The wind was not good for my fence crossing, but I needed to make some modifications to the stand if I was going to hunt there in the morning. I decided to use my scent lock suit and risk the unfavorable conditions to make the necessary changes. After modifying the location I settled in for the evening hunt. The wind was fairly strong and I felt comfortable that my scent would be dispersed enough to successfully hunt the stand. The evening started off quite good. A pair of young bucks crossed without winding me, and I felt a bit more at ease with the situation. Shortly thereafter, a nice eight point came in. I was glad to see the bucks were still using the area. He fed on some corn I had scattered near the main trail for nearly 10 minutes. Though I had no intentions of shooting, my confidence was growing by the minute. I used the opportunity to test my newly concealed location by standing and coming to

full draw. The additional brush did the trick, though the deer looked my direction he could not pick me off, and dismissed me as part of the scenery. Then the inevitable, the wind died and a light rain started to fall. Suddenly, the buck dropped, whirled, and tore off into the brush, as if I had beat him in the head with a 2 x 4. Busted again, I watched as the deer pranced around the field with his tail up, flagging any other deer in the vicinity as to my presence. I thought about bailing on the location as soon as the buck left, but decided to stick it out for the duration. A group of four does approached with the coming darkness. I stood in anticipation of a possible shot opportunity, but as the lead doe entered the area she suddenly went on red alert. Her alarmed state was immediately passed through the group and all four deer were soon scanning the brush for danger. As they retreated in the direction from which they came. I quickly and quietly slipped out of the area.

The next morning brought cold temps and a northwest wind, perfect for the stand. I slipped in as usual, well before sunrise. The wind grew stronger with every minute as darkness began to give way to the morning. I was beginning to doubt my decision to hunt under these conditions when I

caught movement to the north. A single deer moved through the brush, I was sure it was a buck. As he approached, I thought of the buck that cheated me two weeks ago. He closed the distance and at 40 yards I could tell this deer wasn't even close. He got to the fence, paused and his attention was drawn to the south. He stood there for a few minutes then turned and disappeared into the brush. I thought "What's up with that?" I turned to discover the large bodied buck was working his way toward the fence crossing from the south. There was no doubt that this was the same deer that eluded me two weeks ago. I waited patiently for the buck to close the distance. Earlier that morning, I had scattered some corn out near the main trail in hopes of distracting a hungry deer long enough to get a shot. And this morning the buck seemed to favor the food over the does. The buck approached, noticed the corn, and immediately started to feed. Though it was much later in the morning than his last visit, the deer's antlers were still unidentifiable in the darkness. I checked my gear and patiently waited in hopes that the corn

would hold the buck long enough to get a look at his head gear. Time seemed to stand still. The deer turned and I got a glimpse of a tall G2 tine. He took a few steps toward me then looked away and I could see he had a decent spread. The wind was picking up and the deer seemed to be getting a little nervous. I knew that the opportunity would soon be gone if something didn't happen soon. The deer then turned toward me and closed the distance to 30 yards and began feeding again. Finally I could see some mass and felt that if the buck would offer a shot I would take him. The deer was quartering toward me. Suddenly his attention was drawn to the south. The buck stepped, turned and posed as if to oblige me, there he stood 30 yards broadside. I came to full draw. Sensing movement, the buck turned and looked right at me. It was too late, the arrow was on it's way. The freshly sharpened Muzzy tipped Easton shaft hit its mark. The buck dropped and whirled off at a frantic pace, I knew it wouldn't be long. Weak with emotion, I grasped a tree limb and eased myself into the seat. It had been eight long years since one

of my arrows had taken a buck. I thanked God for the wild things and the opportunity to harvest such a magnificent animal. I stayed and hunted out a good portion of the morning, until the wind and rain got the best of me. The recovery was short, and I soon had my first trophy of the 1999 season, a nice 110" eight point buck.

With the harvest of my buck, my focus was now on taking a doe for management purposes. This was much easier said than done. Since the early stages of the rut, doe sightings on my property had become quite infrequent. I returned to the lease the following weekend, Dec.18-19, with the intent of taking the first doe that offered me a shot. This would be the final weekend of my 1999 Texas hunting season, as I had plans to hunt out of state with my brother after Christmas. The hunting was fantastic, with deer sightings coming on every outing. The only problem, every deer I had seen this weekend was a buck. I have experienced a wide variety of pitfalls, shortcomings and challenges in my pursuit of the whitetail deer, but this was a first. And what a problem to have, nothing but bucks traveling through my area. So with the setting sun on Dec.19 I called my Texas deer season



complete. But to my surprise, my employer gave me the opportunity to return one last time. So again I made the journey west, for another chance at a Texas whitetail. The hunt started out just as it finished off the previous weekend, with nothing but bucks being sighted all morning. The evening seemed to be off to a similar start as a pair of bucks hit the crossing. Finally, a pair of does came to the fence. The larger of the two passed without incidence, as the smaller doe taunted me with a marginal shot. I was at full draw looking for a reason too loose the arrow, but the shot never materialized. Eventually I was forced to let down, and the little doe continued on to the north. To my surprise, while my attention had been diverted by the pair, a group of deer slipped in from the south. I turned to see eight deer feeding off the main trail to the crossing. At first I thought they were all bucks but closer examination revealed three does. Then in came another two bucks, and another, and another, and another. Thirteen deer milling around my stand, ten bucks and three does.

How the heck am I going to get to full draw with all these eyes scanning the brush? I decided not to force anything and just let it happen. The deer pushed each other around for some time, and eventually calmed down. The larger bucks began to ignore the younger deer as the smaller bucks chased the does around the area. Finally one of the young six pointers pushed a large doe outside of the group. A quick scan of the area, all heads down. I brought my bow to full draw. Undetected, I centered the pin on the doe's shoulder and let one fly. The arrow hit its mark and the deer was down in seconds, within sight of the stand. Mission accomplished, Texas season complete. I returned home to celebrate Christmas with the family, and to get ready for my late season trip to Iowa.

Christmas 1999 was a bit different for my family and me. We had survived the most challenging year of our lives, and came out smelling like a rose. The gifts under the tree couldn't begin to compare with what we had received throughout the year. The highlight being the birth of our fourth child, John

Lewis, on July 1st. We had grown as a family, and became better people in the process. On top of it all, I was finishing up the year in classic style with my two successful bow kills. The late season hunt with my brother, Jay, has become somewhat a tradition since moving to Texas sixteen years ago. Though I was excited about the trip to western Iowa, just being able to hunt with my brother in such a fantastic part of the country would be satisfying enough. Whether we harvested game or not didn't really mater, we were upholding a tradition we hope to pass on to our children, as our father had passed on to us.

Our hunt was to take place the week following Christmas and run through the New Year. With all the hype about Y2K, I was hoping for a quick and successful trip so that I could be home with the family for the end of the world. Anyhow, our trip was arranged through the P.W.M.A (Private Wildlife Management Association @ www.pwma.com) on an intensively managed private ranch in western Iowa. We first hunted this ranch during the 96/97 season, and were amazed at the quantity and quality of animals that call this place home. After spending some time talking with the landowner, Joe Loomis, you quickly come to

the realization that your next shot could easily put you in the record books. Although I had practiced QDM at home in Texas, I was not prepared for the quality of animal I would have to pass on in Iowa. Body size alone is enough to make most hunters cringe, with field dressed weights of more than 200# at age 4 ½. That first season was something special as I passed on a number of P&Y class deer, in hopes that one of the many B&C monsters would make its way within bow range of my stand. Even on the last evenings hunt I had the opportunity to harvest a 125" - 130" buck that I chose to pass. Though I had yet to take an animal of this caliber, it was easy to see this deer was only a 3 ½ year old animal. It was also very apparent to me that this was a place I hoped to return to for years to come, and passing these younger bucks now would increase my odds on future hunts. I felt that I was helping Joe meet his management goals, and hoped that I would be rewarded for my efforts with a trophy of my own someday.

The following year we were greeted by one of the

worst ice storms to blanket the region in years. The 97/98 season was for the most part a bust. Traveling the icy terrain was extremely noisy, not to mention hazardous. The morning hunts were a complete wash as the deer headed for the beds as we tried to make our way across the icy corn fields. The daytime highs seldom reached above freezing, and when they did it just made things worse for the next day. Evening movement seemed to be more difficult for the deer as they slipped around and noisily punched their hooves through the ice. The deer seemed to scare themselves as they noisily made their way through the woods. Though opportunity eluded me on this trip, Jay did have a shot on a nice buck late one evening. Not allowing for the deer's heightened sense of alarm cost him a nice buck. At the sound of the bow going off, the deer dropped and whirled. The shot went high and shaved some hair from the deer's back, allowing him to get another year older. So, for the second time the deer came out on top, yet we still looked forward to our next trip.

We did not draw tags for the 98/99 season, but a successful draw for 1999/2000 had us returning once again for our late season hunt. In the weeks leading up to our trip, I eagerly monitored the weather in the area. Good spring and summer conditions had the deer fat and healthy going into winter. We arrived to a snow-covered camp and a forecast for unseasonably warm weather. In fact, the prediction for the week looked a lot like Texas weather, I felt right at home. We unloaded our gear and made a game plan for the first day's hunt. With the warm temperatures, we all felt the deer movements would be confined to early morning and late evening. Morning hunts on the farm have always been tough during the late season, so we decided to hunt some of Joe's nearby lease land. The area we chose to hunt is mainly crop land with scattered pockets of timber along the hillsides, creeks, and fences. The deer in the area are accustomed to being bumped from these pockets of timber by the local farmers and ranchers. They will abandon one thicket for the next when they feel intruded upon by humans, then immediately go back to their normal routine if not pursued. Over the years Joe and his partner, Morris Mohn, have turned this movement into an exciting and



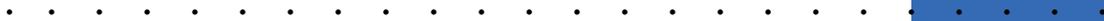
productive form of hunting. It is not quite a full-blown deer drive, but more of a controlled bump. The results are fantastic, nonetheless. Our plan was to enter one of the centrally located pockets of timber and set up on the main runways and escape trails that cut through the woods. Joe and Morris would then back out and begin to bump the deer from the surrounding pockets of timber. When everything goes right, the hunters are in for one heck of an outing. The sighting of trophy bucks is common, and being in the right place at the right time still applies, along with good camouflage and proper scent elimination techniques. These deer don't achieve monster buck status by being stupid, and one mistake by the hunter will have every deer in the county avoiding his location.

Jay and I got settled into our stands before sunrise then waited for the action to begin. I had a good feeling about this morning's hunt, and everything just seemed perfect. My stand was located at the top of a wooded hillside, overlooking a clover field.

Jay was just down the hill and to the north about 200 yards. It wasn't long before the deer started to move, and funnel through the woods. A steady parade of does, fawns and younger bucks, along with some very large turkeys moved across the clover and cut through the woods between us. Though none of these deer were what I was looking for, the quantity of animals had me excited about our prospects. I watched deer and turkey move through the timber for hours, until I saw Joe heading in my direction. I was gathering my things when Joe got to my stand and gave me the good news, Jay had taken a 130" class buck. I was excited for him and couldn't wait to see his Iowa trophy. When we arrived, Jay had already finished field dressing the buck and was ready to take some photos. The 4 1/2 year old sported nine points with a 18" inside spread and incredible mass. He field dressed at 225 lbs. and looked to be in very good shape for a post rut buck. We roughed him out at 134 7/8", and felt that if he didn't break his G2, and brow tine on the right side, he would easily be a 140" class deer.

Nonetheless he is a fantastic deer and Jay's best bow kill to date. As it turns out, the deer that passed between the two of us continued on to the next pocket of timber and actually kicked a group of six deer back toward our location. The group of two bucks and four does came right at Jay. "At first I was going to pass" he said, knowing of the monsters that inhabit the area. "But the buck came up and offered a perfect shot. Before I knew it, the arrow was on it's way." The 32-yard shot proved to be perfect and the deer was down in seconds. What an awesome way to start our hunt.

The deer in this part of the country grow extremely heavy coats, and when the temperature gets above freezing they just don't move unless their safety is compromised. This was definitely the case, with daytime temps reaching the mid 50's, the deer were heading in early and not coming out until well after dark. Deer sightings that evening and the next morning were minimal, at best, and what deer I had seen were unidentifiable in the darkness. After the second morning's hunt, Joe felt that the wind and weather conditions were perfect for doing a drive in the northwest part of the farm. We would occupy stands located



on a North Central ridge, and push the woods from the Northwest. This would leave the remainder of the property untouched for the evening's hunt, if needed. Jay and Morris were more than willing to make the drive, and we didn't have to twist Joe's arm to get him into a stand. After going over the maps and making a game plan, Joe and I were off to our stands. It wasn't long before the deer started parading through the woods. My stand was located at the top of a ridge, in a large Cedar tree. Joe was about 150 yards down the hill to the North. Both stands overlooked a maze of active trails that lead to the main feeding area. As luck would have it, most of the deer crossed 150 yards to the north of Joe's stand, completely out of my sight. I did have some does and younger bucks come by, and spent about 10 minutes messing with a small buck's mind, and a new grunt call. Then just about the time I thought it was over, a group of about eight deer started down a trail between Joe and me. There were three decent bucks and one that looked to be a shooter. The others were either too young or doe's.

As they made their way through the woods, they began angling toward the north. I grabbed my binoculars and watched as the group approached Joe's stand. I knew they were close when they all stopped. About the time I began to wonder if Joe was going to shoot, I heard the bow sound off. The shot looked good from my point of view, as I watched the buck kick and whirl then retreat to the Southwest. I sat tight and waited. It was Joe's deer and I would let him make the call. It was about 45 minutes before I saw Joe taking up the trail. We decided to return to the farm, Joe and Morris would go to search for the deer and I would get ready for the evening hunt.

Joe and Morris returned with bad news. The blood trail looked good to start, but faded as it went on. The deer stopped a couple of times and ended up in a known bedding area. Joe decided to leave him alone till morning. With the cold nights and a little luck we hoped to retrieve the deer first thing in the morning. The evening and following morning brought numerous deer sightings, but nothing that gave me the urge to bend the bow. Joe's

morning search moved the buck from his bed and put him back in the same thicket as the previous evening. The deer seemed to be reluctant to leave the property, so Joe backed off one more time. He felt that we should get back on stand and try to move the deer, same as the previous day. The only difference being that I would occupy a stand at the bottom of the hill, instead of the top. With any luck, we would be able to get a second arrow in the buck, or maybe a good look at the wound to determine if he would survive. Morris would be pushing alone as my brother, Jay, was heading for home this morning. We got Jay loaded up and ready to head home. I told him that he set the precedence with his buck and I would take nothing less. My goal of being home for New Years was looking somewhat hopeless. I would have to harvest and retrieve a deer today if that were to be possible. We got Jay on the road and I prepared for the afternoon and evening hunts. The plan was to hunt the forced movement till 3:00 and if that didn't work I would head for an evening stand from there. We went over the plan one more time then headed for the woods. It was just after noon when I got settled in. The temperature was in the mid-50's and I felt that I should be fishing not hunting. It was

nearly 1:30 pm before we had any activity. Suddenly, six deer began to cross the cut cornfield from the Northwest. One was a large buck. I grabbed my binoculars for a better look. He didn't appear to be wounded, so I knew it wasn't Joe's deer. They crossed the corn and headed into some dense cover on the next ridge over. I could see the does moving around but no signs of the buck. It wasn't long before they all calmed down and bedded up on the shady side of the ridge. About 10 minutes later, I could see Morris working the other side of the cornfield where the deer came from. He was still a half-mile away or better, and all I could do was hope that the deer would spook again. About 20 more minutes passed. I could hear some turkey moving through the woods. A few minutes later there was deer movement on the ridge. Suddenly, turkey exploded from the southwest. Does and smaller bucks began to filter down from the ridge. I checked my equipment one more time and prayed that I would get a shot at one of these monsters from western Iowa. Some does busted from the point and

headed across the corn. Another group cut between Joe and me. A few minutes later, a group of young bucks headed across the corn and into the woods behind me. Then, just as fast as it all began, everything got quiet. It would soon be 3:00 pm and I began preparing myself for the evening hunt. I sat back in the stand wondering if I would ever get a crack at one of these Iowa trophies. Maintaining my confidence was getting tougher by the minute, and being home for the New Year seemed nearly impossible. I had begun to gather my things, when I heard some commotion up on the ridge. I stood and anchored my release to the string. When I looked up, I saw movement, a pair of deer was heading down the ridge in my direction. They cleared the brush and I knew instantly the lead deer was a shooter. I remember looking at the second deer, but all I can say about it now is that it was brown. Another quick check, everything looked good. When I looked up again, the deer had closed the distance to 60 yards, they weren't running but they were moving at a good pace. I began to draw when they reached 40

yards. I anchored and began looking for a shooting lane. The deer stopped dead in their tracks at 25 yards, I had no shot. I glanced ahead, looking for a lane. I was sure they were going to turn and start up the hill. The large buck looked back toward the ridge, searching for the intruder. Satisfied with his decision to flee, the buck put his head down and continued on the trail. Before I knew it, he was heading down into the drainage I was sitting over. I centered the deer's vitals, and at 13 yards released on the moving buck. The arrow passed completely through and he never even flinched. I had to tear my eyes from the now crimson colored shaft to find the buck. He cleared the drainage and stopped again 20 yards behind me. I searched for the wound, but his vitals were covered by brush. The buck scanned the timber ahead for a place to flee. Then it happened, his left rear leg seemed to lose its footing. The deer took a few quick steps forward and stopped at the tree line. He stared into the timber, wanting to run, but his legs could no longer hold the weight of his massive body. The brute toppled over in less than 10 seconds, only 30 yards from the stand. I found myself grasping for tree limbs, and was very thankful to be wearing a safety belt. I sat in



the stand trying to maintain my composure, and control the urge to scream out at the top of my lungs. Emotions ran wild as I offered a prayer of thanks for my good fortune and such a magnificent animal. I had a quick talk with my Dad, thanked him for being a bowhunter and passing that desire onto me. I kept looking back, waiting for the alarm to go off and ruin this awesome dream I found myself

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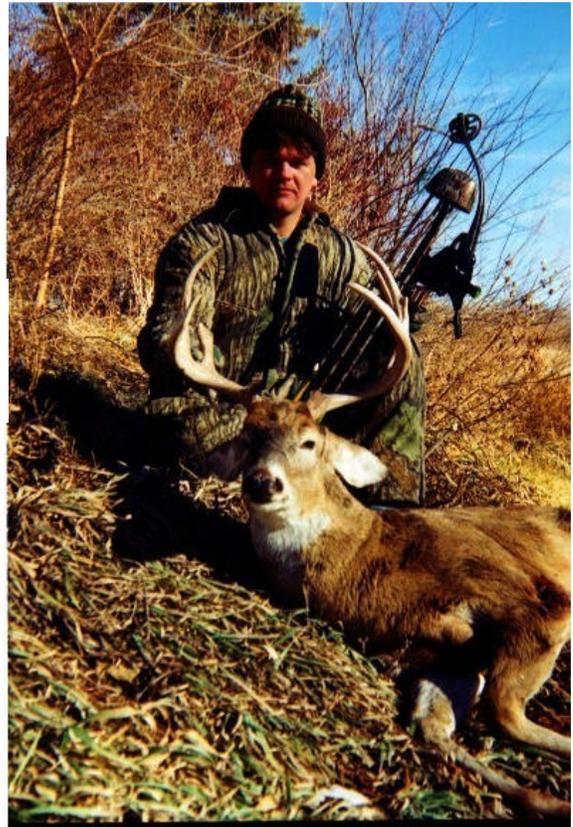
caught up in. It never happened, and we were soon admiring my trophy. Joe instantly recognized the buck as one that he nick named "Chicken Foot" for his unusual G2 configuration. Joe was excited, and congratulated me for taking the best buck of the season from his place, and shattering the record for shortest blood trail. I took care of the field dressing while Joe returned for the camera

and some help. With everything said and done, the 4 1/2 year old Buck dressed out at 240 lbs. He carries a massive 10 point typical frame, with a 20" inside spread, and 8+ inches of nontypical antler to boot. We green scored him in the low 170's gross, and after some deductions for a broken G2 and G4 he nets in the mid 160's. I hope to have the rack officially scored for The Pope & Young Record Book in early March. What an awesome way to end the season and the millennium, and I made it home for the New Year with three hours to spare.



Jeff Sendziak with his Coleman County Buck.

Right: Jay Sendziak with his 130" Iowa Monster!



Below: Jeff with his 134 7/8 Iowa Buck!



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