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Vol. 1 Issue 176

Winter 2007



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Harvest**

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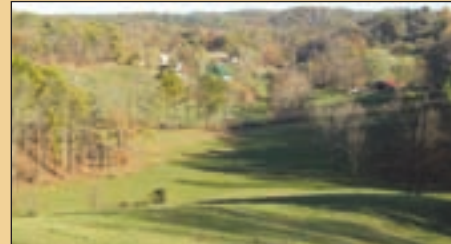
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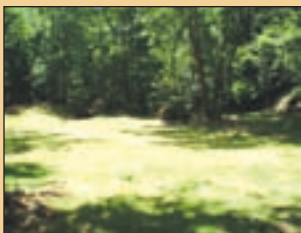
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Magazine

Volume 1 Issue 176

Publisher and Editor
Mark A. Goudy

Contributing Editors
West Virginia Division Of
Natural Resources

No Subscriptions Offered

W.Va. Sportsman is a monthly publication.

W.Va. Sportsman

P.O. Box 5521
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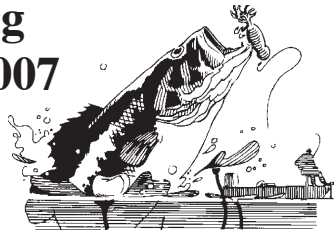
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Cover Photo

A quality 10 point Mercer County buck was taken by Mark Long. This WVU fan is probably upset like so many loyal fans are presently. Coach Rodriguez abandoned our school for Michigan. **GO BUCKEYES!**

Look for this magazine online each month towards the middle of the month. The last posting on the web was delayed. The web-master has been busy building a new house. We apologize.
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2007 Buck Season Results

Preliminary data collected from game checking stations across the state indicate deer hunters in West Virginia harvested 66,570 bucks during the two-week buck season, which ran from November 19 through December 1, according to Frank Jezioro, Director of the West Virginia Division of Natural Resources. The 2007 buck harvest was slightly higher than the 2006 harvest of 66,115. The top ten counties for buck harvest were as follows: Preston (2,323), Hampshire (2,231), Greenbrier (2,215), Hardy (2,104), Mason (2,083), Jackson (2,070), Braxton (1,986), Randolph (1,960), Monroe (1,952), and Roane (1,903).

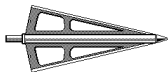
Twenty-nine counties reported an increase in the buck kill over 2006 while 22 reported a decrease. The decline in several counties may be related to an outbreak of Epizootic

Hemorrhagic Disease (EHD-Serotype II virus) that occurred in several northern and western counties during the months of September and October. The EHD virus, which is spread by a midge, disappears with the first frost; however, the mortality rate in localized areas can reach as high as 20 percent, and this may have contributed to the decrease in harvest in certain portions of counties affected by the disease.

Wildlife Biologists and Wildlife Managers operating biological checking stations in Hampshire, Upshur, Mason and Tyler counties reported deer in good body condition with improved antler development. "Maintaining deer densities at level compatible with existing habitat conditions and within carrying capacity as outlined in the

continue to the next page

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Game Check



A massive 12 point was taken by this hunter. *Photo courtesy of Sun Valley Country Store in Speedway.*

Winter 2007 ~ Page 4

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Matt Ruppenthal brought in a nice buck. *Photo courtesy of Boone's Bow Shop in Parkersburg.*

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West Virginia Division of Natural Resources' White-tailed Deer Operational Plan will continue to provide healthy deer herds and good hunting opportunities in the Mountain State," said Jezioro.

White-tailed deer are the product of the environment. Too many deer on a given tract of land will result in loss of body weight, reduction in antler development, decrease in reproduction and death due to starvation during winter months. "The state's deer management program is designed to be very responsive to changing population conditions," noted Jezioro. "Deer regulations are adjusted annually to become either more conservative or more liberal, depending upon our data analysis and management objective for a given county." For example, in those counties where deer populations were above the population objective, liberal antlerless seasons were implemented in 2007. More conservative antlerless deer bag limits were applied to counties that were below their population objectives.

Wildlife Biologists will analyze data from the combined 2007 deer
continue to the next page



John Murray shot a nice 9 point.
Photo courtesy of Starcher's Sport Shop in Lubeck.

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Junior Rooker caught a citation smallmouth. Photo courtesy of Waterfront Sporting Goods in Alderson.

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seasons (i.e., buck, antlerless, archery and muzzleloader) for each of the state's 55 counties, before making appropriate recommendations for next year's deer season.

Jeziro reminds hunters that the traditional six-day antlerless deer season in selected counties on both public and private land ends December 8. The Youth and Class Q antlerless season will open on Monday and Tuesday December 24 and 25 and be followed by a four-day reopening of antlerless deer season (December 26-29) on private land in 42 selected counties.



Roger Bonnell, from Pennsboro, nailed a big 10 point in Doddridge.



Kala Cox, from Arnoldsburg, bagged two deer.



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Justin Swann, from Procroville, got his 1st buck in Ohio.

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Cody Steele shot a nice buck. *Photo courtesy of Boone's Bow Shop in Parkersburg.*

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Josh Murray used a bow for this nice 8 point. *Photo courtesy of Starcher's Sport Shop in Lubeck.*



A 430 pound black bear was tagged by Seth Hornick. *Photo courtesy of Middle Mountain Sporting Goods in Elkins.*



David Smith, from Grafton, shot a Wyoming antelope.

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PJ Renzelli, from Bridgeport, shot a Lewis County buck.

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Steve Nichols, from Amma, has a nice 9 point buck.



Teresa Higginbotham bagged a Tyler County buck.



Matt Rowan, from Gaps Mill, went to Colorado for this 5X5 bull elk.

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This hunter took a big Ohio buck.
Photo courtesy of Dodd's Sporting Goods
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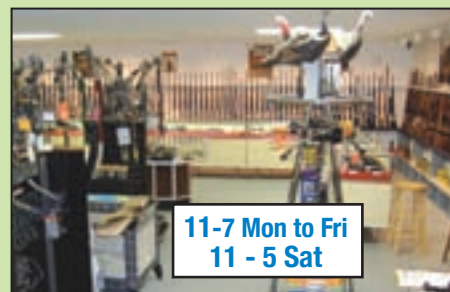
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Lake Russell Fishing Event

The 11th annual Wright's Riverside Marine bass tournament was attended by 44 local fishermen. The 22 teams stayed in cabins in Elberton, Georgia.

This popular event consists of three practice days followed by the four day main event. A small pot tournament is held on each practice days. The main tournament adds the combined weight for the four days with a cash award.

Mick Been, caught a 10 pound, 3 ounce largemouth during practice. An 8 pound, 2 ounce bass was caught during the main event by Tom Frazier.

The four day tournament was won for the third straight year by the hosts, Dan Holdren and Cec Schneider. There is a 5 fish per day limit and their combined weight was 45 pound, 15 ounces. This makes their fourth win in the eleven years.

For the week, over 906 pounds of bass were landed by the 22 teams.

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Mick Been landed a 10 pound, 9 oz. largemouth at Lake Russell.



Local fishermen competed at Lake Russell in the Wright's Marine Open.

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A big Nebraska buck was shot by Butch Lilly. *Photo courtesy of Cardinal Pawnbrokers in Beckley.*



Tyler Foster shot a 15 point buck in Cabin Creek. *Photo courtesy of Bowlistic Archery in Chelyan.*



Buck Pack caught 5 1/2 pound December smallmouth. *Photo courtesy of Three Rivers Edge in Hinton.*

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Fall Wild Turkey Record Harvest

Preliminary harvest figures show a kill of 1,491 wild turkeys for the fall 2007 season. "This number should exceed 1,500 birds when the official count of game checking tags is tallied in early 2008," reported Paul R. Johansen, Assistant Chief of Game Management for the West Virginia Division of Natural Resources. The harvest is currently 26 percent higher than the 1,186 recorded in 2006, and the highest in the past four years.

The top fall counties during the fall season were Monroe (181), Greenbrier (170), Summers (111), Pocahontas (106), and Nicholas (101). The harvest was 33 percent higher in the traditional fall hunt counties of the Mountains Region, located primarily in Districts 3 and 4 of the state. The kill was down 7 percent in the traditional fall hunt counties of the Eastern Panhandle.

"Our biologists had predicted a higher kill in the mountains region because of good brood counts and poor food conditions that tend to concentrate and expose turkeys, making them more vulnerable,"

continue to the next page



Dave Poske harvested a quality 10 point buck. *Photo courtesy of Crossroads General Store near Newark.*

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Steve Vaffar got a black bear this year. *Photo courtesy of Bowlistic Archery in Chelyan.*



Karmen Benjamin shot a big buck. *Photo courtesy of Johnson's Sporting Goods in Summersville.*

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said Johansen. “In addition, our staff also expected a lower kill in the Eastern Panhandle because of good acorn crops that tend to scatter flocks into more remote areas, thus challenging hunters and lowering the harvest in that area.”

Also aiding in the increased harvest for 2007 was the addition of four new counties (Jackson, Mason, Monongalia and Summers) to a one-week fall season. “Information from past fall seasons and data

from our ongoing gobbler population research study allowed for liberalizing our management strategy for opening counties for the fall hunting period,” stated Johansen. “This strategy formally permitted opening counties to fall hunting when they showed harvest of one gobbler per square mile for the preceding spring turkey kill; the new strategy was lowered to 0.75 toms per square mile.” The four new counties added 226 birds to the to-

tal count, lead by Summers County with a harvest of 111 turkeys.



Young Joe LaRocca, from Bridgeport, caught a stethead.

ATTENTION WV HUNTERS

While Gov. Manchin has created the "Open for Business" slogan for WV, The West Virginia Dept of Natural Resources is allowing the sale of Whitetail Deer Urine in the state from unknown sources outside of WV. This increases the potienal spread of Chronic Wasting Disease according to Frank Jezioro (WV State DNR Director) . Anderson's Whitetail's is a locally owned and operated Whitetail and Scent business in which the WVDNR has wrongfully stopped the sale of local in-state scent products with over a 3 year CWD testing record . "Open for Business " is "Closed to In-state Business Owners".

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Five Deer Test Positive For CWD

Preliminary test results have detected the Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) agent in five hunter-harvested deer collected in Hampshire County during the 2007 deer firearms hunting season. "As part of our agency's ongoing and intensive CWD surveillance effort, samples were collected from 1,285 hunter-harvested deer brought to game checking stations in Hampshire County," noted Frank Jezioro, Director for the West Virginia Division of Natural Resources (DNR). The five CWD positive deer included one 2.5 year-old doe, two 2.5 year-old bucks, one 3.5 year-old buck, and one 4.5 year-old buck. Four of the five deer were harvested within the Hampshire County CWD Containment Area (i.e., that portion of



Young Trenton Hardbarger shot an 8 point buck. Photo courtesy of Jarrett's Bait in Elizabeth.

Hampshire County located North of U.S. Route 50). The fifth deer was also harvested in Hampshire County, but it was killed outside the CWD Containment Area near Yellow Springs, West Virginia.

CWD has now been detected in a total of 19 deer in Hampshire County (i.e., one road-killed deer confirmed in 2005, four deer collected by the DNR in 2005, five deer collected by the DNR in 2006, one hunter-harvest deer taken during the 2006 deer season, three deer collected by the DNR in 2007 and five hunter-harvested deer taken

continue to the next page



Carrie Crislip, from Ravenswood, harvested a 9 point in Doddridge.

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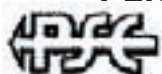
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during the 2006 deer season, three deer collected by the DNR in 2007 and five hunter-harvested deer taken during the 2007 deer season). Operating within guidelines established by its CWD – Incident Response Plan, the DNR has taken the steps necessary to implement appropriate management actions designed to control the spread of this disease, prevent further introduction of the disease, and possibly eliminate the disease from the state.

The following disease management actions have been implemented by the DNR within Hampshire County.

- Continue CWD surveillance efforts designed to determine the prevalence and distribution of the disease.
- Lower deer population level to reduce the risk of spreading the disease from deer to deer by implementing appropriate antlerless deer hunting regulations designed to increase hunter opportunity to harvest female deer;
- Establish reasonable, responsible and appropriate deer carcass transport restrictions designed to lower the risk of moving the disease to other locations;



Cody Coburn shot a nice Mercer County buck.

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- Establish reasonable, responsible and appropriate regulations relating to the feeding and baiting of deer within the affected area to reduce the risk of spreading of the disease from deer to deer.

"Landowner and hunter cooperation throughout this entire CWD surveillance effort in Hampshire County has been fantastic," Jezioro noted. "As we strive to meet this wildlife disease challenge and implement appropriate management strategies, the continued support and involvement of landowners and hunters will be essential. The DNR remains committed to keeping the

continue to the next page



Andrew Davis took a big buck *Photo courtesy of Dee's Sporting Goods in Hamlin.*

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public informed and involved in these wildlife disease management actions.”

CWD is a neurological disease found in deer and elk, and it belongs to a family of diseases known as transmissible spongiform encephalopathies. The disease is thought to be caused by abnormal, proteinaceous particles called prions that slowly attack the brain of infected deer and elk, causing the animals to progressively become emaciated, display abnormal behavior and invariably results in the death of the infected animal. There is no known treatment for CWD, and it is fatal for the infected deer or elk. It is important to note that currently there is no evidence to suggest CWD poses a risk for humans or domestic animals.

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Young Kyle Adkins took a nice 8 point buck. *Photo courtesy of Dee's Sporting Goods in Hamlin.*

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sional wildlife biologists, wildlife managers and conservation officers are working diligently to fully implement the DNR's CWD – Incident Response Plan, which is designed to effectively address this wildlife disease threat,” said Jezioro. “Hunters, landowners and

other members of the public should feel confident that we have some of the best wildlife biologists and veterinarians in the world, including those stationed at the Southeastern Cooperative Wildlife Disease Study in Athens, Georgia, working collaboratively on this situation.”



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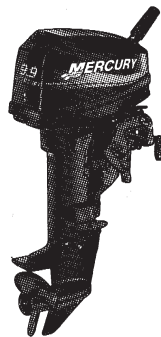
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John Goots used a muzzleloader for this nice 8 point. *Photo courtesy of Johnny's Outdoors in Boaz.*



Russell Hansen had a good hunt with this 8 point buck. *Photo courtesy of Jarrett's Bait in Elizabeth.*

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Joe Gallo bagged a trophy Ohio buck. *Photo courtesy of Johnny's Outdoors in Boaz.*



Chris Payne took A Fayette County buck with his bow. *Photo courtesy of Cardinal Pawnbrokers in Beckley.*

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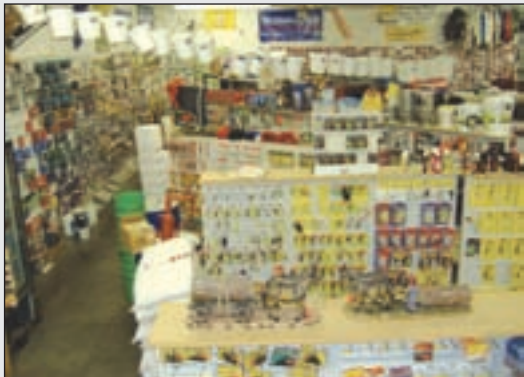
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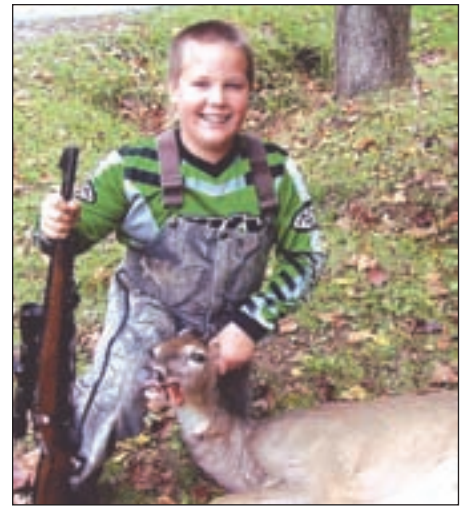
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Evan Hughes took his 1st doe in the special youth hunt. *Photo courtesy of Justin's Hunting & Fishing in Huntington.*



John Bryant bagged a nice 9 point with a bow. *Photo courtesy of Boone's Bow Shop in Parkersburg.*

**Mail In Your BIG FISH Pictures
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Form Is On Page 37**



Wendy Meadows bagged a Tyler County buck. *Photo courtesy of Cardinal Pawnbrokers in Beckley.*

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Terry McGrady's 8 point bow buck was still in velvet. *Photo courtesy of Dee's Sporting Goods in Hamlin.*




Jamie Dever went to Ohio for this 157 P&Y bow buck. *Photo courtesy of Jerry's Sporting Goods in Horner.*




Charlie Staats, from Sandyville, shot an unusual albino 6 point.



Bobbie Cooper bagged an 8 point. *Photo courtesy of Dee's Sporting Goods in Hamlin.*



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Becky Stalnaker used a bow for this nice 10 point Wirt County buck. Photo courtesy Bogg's in Elizabeth.



D.J. Jarrell, only 10, got an 11 point for his first buck in Roane County.



A 16 pt. Ohio bow buck scored 175 for Ron Miller, from Clarksbug.



Bobby Lockhart shot a nice 9 point. Photo courtesy of Jarrett's Bait in Elizabeth.



Rodney Starcher bagged a nice 8 point. Photo courtesy of Stacher's Sport Shop in Lubeck.

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Trout Fishing Tips

Fishing for trout can be quite enjoyable, as well as tasty. In this article, I will give you some tips that will help you make more catches when you're fishing for trout. Enjoy this article, and use these tips to land more trout.

In general, most people fish for one of the four main species of trout -- rainbow, brook, cutthroat, and brown. The sporting challenge of catching a 16 inch or longer trout in a flowing stream or river with minimum fishing gear is a rush that is hard to equal.

One of the best ways to fish for trout is to use gang hooks for your bait presentation. This is preferable to a single hook for an obvious reason. With gang hooks, you can present your bait in a more natural manner, as well as being able to offer twice as much bait.

Second, you should incorporate using retractors when you go out for trout fishing. This makes getting the right equipment quick and easy, so you don't have to dig in your pockets if you need something. The less time you spend fiddling around with your equipment, the more time you can devote to concentrating on catching trout.

Third, natural smelling bait seems to work the best. This means you should be careful of what comes in contact with your hands, before you bait your hook. The best idea is to grab a chunk of dirt and rub it into your hands before baiting your hook. This will ensure that the bait smells natural to the trout.

There you have it, three very simple tips any fisherman can employ to increase his chances of catching trout. Simply use gang hooks for your bait presentation, retractors to make equipment retrieval easy, and also make sure to keep your bait smelling natural.

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Billy Jarrell used a bow for this buck. Photo courtesy of Bowlistic Archery in Chelyan.

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Gun Cleaning

1. ALWAYS CLEAN FROM BREECH TO MUZZLE IN THE NATURAL DIRECTION OF THE BULLET.

When you fire your gun, the powder residue and dirt are in the barrel. The chamber and receiver are clean. If you run a brush or patch from the muzzle end you will push this dirt, residue, and moisture into the cham-

ber and receiver. This is a major cause of stuck cases or problems with lever actions and auto-loading rifles and shotguns. If you push or pull a brush back toward the chamber, you will notice the brush will throw the debris from the bore

continue to the next page



Paul Craig shot his 1st Ohio white-tail. Photo courtesy of Johnny's Outdoors in Boaz.



Natalie Francis, from Belleville, shot a good 10 point.



KD Hill shot a great 8 point buck. Photo courtesy of Sun Valley Country Store in Speedway.

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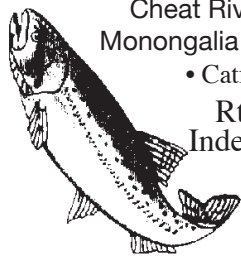
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back into the chamber and locking lugs.

2. CENTER THE TIP AND ROD.
BE CAREFUL NOT TO LET EI-
THER RUB THE BORE

All firearms record their history. This is the reason most people look down the barrel of a firearm. An experienced eye can tell the method of cleaning, the number of shots, and the gun maintenance applied to the firearm. Many marks are caused by people who carelessly let the tip or rod rub the inside the barrel.

3. USE A CLEAN PATCH SUR-
FACE EACH TIME YOU GO
DOWN THE BARREL.

This is similar to mopping a floor and rinsing the mop out. When you are using your firearm you will get abrasive dirt in the muzzle. The patch with solvent will flush this dirt out in the shortest distance. If you use this patch surface again,

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the dirt will be deposited in the chamber and neck. The next bullet continue to the next page



Doug Cottrell, from West Union, used a bow for this Tyler County 10 point buck.



Mike Villers, from Morgantown, shot a bobcat this season.

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down the barrel picks up this dirt and erodes the throat. This is the exact equivalent of cleaning in the wrong direction.

4. NEVER RUN A BRUSH IN THE BARREL FIRST.


This will damage the firearm. The brush will pick up dirt, moisture or powder residue and deposit it into the chamber or receiver. Never dip a brush in solvent. The solvent at the brush core will collect dirt and drop it into the receiver and chamber.

5. NEVER GO BACK AND FORTH REVERSING THE BRUSH

This will bend the bristles on the brush. This is the equivalent of



Young Austin Dunn harvested a nice 8 point. *Photo courtesy of H&S Sporting Goods in Princeton.*

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bending a wire back and forth until it breaks. You will always ruin a brush if you reverse it while in the bore.

6. USE ONLY A FEW DROPS OF SOLVENT / LUBRICANT.

Many people think the more solvent the better. However, this will damage the firearm. Use only the

solvent that the patch will absorb. If you see too much, the solvent or oil will drip down into the trigger mechanism. This will cause a gummy trigger. If you use too much oil, it will drain back toward the stock and cause premature failure of the wood.



11 years old Tristan Cline shot a big Ohio buck. *Photo courtesy of Clark's Taxidermy in Parkersburg.*



Wes Caruthers went to Putnam County for this big 10 point. *Photo courtesy of Outdoor Specialties in Winfield.*

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New Years Celebrations At State Parks

If variety is the spice of life, West Virginia State Parks are providing seasonally-appropriate events to bring in the New Year.

• Hawks Nest, Canaan Valley, and Blackwater Falls lodges are offering tempting a la carte or buffet meals and lodging for guests looking to steal away and welcome the New Year quietly. The other lodge parks have spiced it up several notches for guests looking for a dinner and dance getaway, according to Sissie Summers, Program Coordinator for State Parks. "There are choices

at state parks to bring in the New Year with great food and dancing."

• Twin Falls packages a party get-away including one or two nights of lodging at Twin Falls Resort State Park Lodge, dinner and a dance, evening refreshments, a champagne toast at midnight, and party favors. This year Twin Falls' patrons will enjoy dance music provided by DJ Superman.

• Tygart Lake, with a 20-room lodge, plus several cabins, features the sounds of Exxposure, a classic/modern band. Tygart Lake is located in Taylor County. Tygart Lake features dinner choices, a dance, and overnight lodging in addition

continue to the next page

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Jason Minnite went to New Mexico for this big 6X5 elk. Photo courtesy of Johnny's Outdoors in Boaz.



PJ & Austin Spaur, from Parkersburg, had success with these two-Pleasants County bucks

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to a champagne toast at midnight.

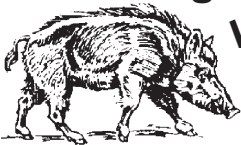
- Chief Logan Lodge, located between Chapmanville and Logan on U.S. 119, offers plenty of space for a large celebration, according to Rick Knotts, General Manager. "This is the second New Year that Chief Logan Lodge has been open. Our dance features '119 South,' a popular country band in southern West Virginia." Overnight packages are available as well as dinner/dance only.

- Pipestem Resort, a traditional New Year's destination, offers lodging at McKeever Lodge, dinner and a dance. DJ Steve Gregory will ring in the New Year. Package includes party favors and a champagne toast at midnight. This year



Brent Stutler brought in 2 coyotes. Photo courtesy of Crossroads General Store near Newport.

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both Pipestem and Chief Logan are offering dance-only options.

- North Bend features the band "Hit and Run" and features the gourmet cooking of Chef Jim Ingles. The meal includes carved prime rib, smokehouse ham or roast turkey topped off with Ingles homemade desserts. Ingles is known for his "mile high pie," according to North Bend Activities Coordinator Jennifer Cogar. "We have a lot of fun at New Year's at North Bend. It's a party not too big, but not too small."

- Cacapon Resort near Berkeley Springs, WV, and Stonewall Resort in Lewis County, also are hosting New Year's options.

Information about dance events and WV State Parks is available online at www.wvstateparks.com. Click into the Calendar of Events for a complete listing or the individual park Web sites. Reservations are required for New Year's packages and are available by calling 800 CALL WVA and asking for the state park that will spice up your New Year's Eve celebration.



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Shonnette Null used a bow to get this quality buck. Photo courtesy of Bogg's in Elizabeth.



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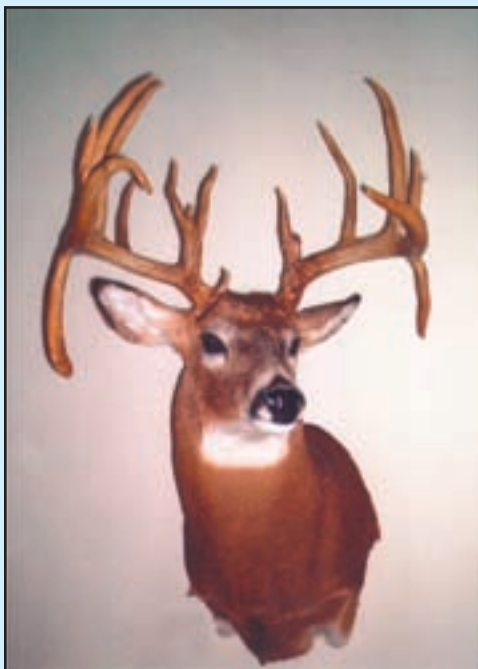
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Donnell Keller shot a nice 12 point buck in WV. Photo courtesy of Starcher's Sport Shop in Lubeck.



Jim Thompson bagged a big 10 point. Photo courtesy of H&S Sporting Goods in Princeton.



Larry Little took a nice 8 point. Photo courtesy of Crossroads General Store near Newport.

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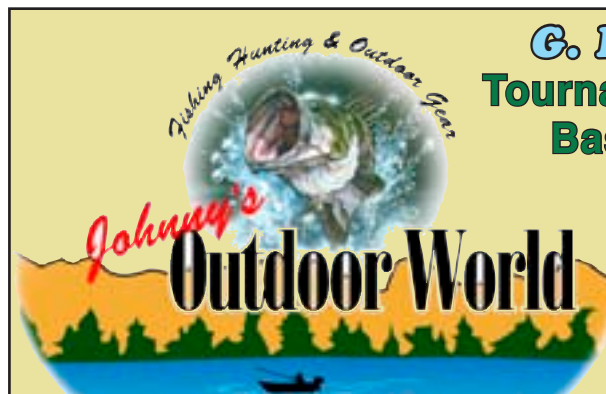
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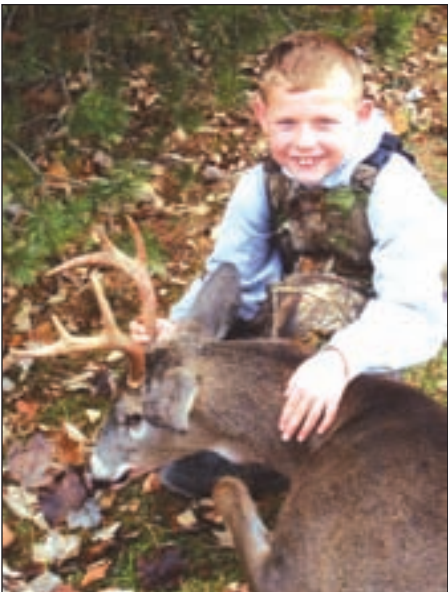
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Young Ben Huffman took advantage of this buck this season. He will enjoy hunting for years to come. *Photo courtesy of Middle Mountain Sporting Goods in Elkins.*



Don Johnson took a 10 point. *Photo courtesy of Middle Mountain Sporting Goods in Elkins.*



Joe Hearn got a nice 9 point with a crossbow in Ohio. *Photo courtesy of Backwater Bait in Newport, Ohio..*



Justin Beeler caught a big walleye. *Photo courtesy of Starcher's Sport Shop in Lubeck.*



Nancy Summers, from Glenville, shot an 8 point in Gilmer County.

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Dan Dean used a bow for this big 168 P&Y Raleigh County buck. Photo courtesy of Cardinal Pawnbrokers in Beckley.



Abe Lambert killed a nice 10 point in Roane County.



Keith Webb took a big 8 point in Wyoming County. Photo courtesy of Cardinal Pawnbrokers in Beckley.

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Rabbit Hunting With Or Without Dogs

Frozen branches slapped my face as I slowly made my way through the tangle. As I stopped to wipe tears away I caught a glimpse of brown. As we made eye contact the cottontail made a beeline for parts unknown.

Instantly the old Remington 1100 20-gauge barked off a round. Then

a second shot was sounded and the rabbit was in a cartwheel.

As I slowly made my way to retrieve the bunny a second rabbit squirted out from a pine. I hollered to my son and a single shot from his Winchester 1300 was sounded. That quickly two plump rabbits were in the game pouch.

HUNTING WITHOUT DOGS

Hunting rabbits without a dog can be very effective. It requires a knowledge of rabbit behavior under varying weather conditions, and can be done solo or with partners. Here are some tips on where to go and when.

A great time to hunt rabbits is the first warm day after a cold snap. Bunnies will be sitting out in open fields soaking up sunlight. On cold and windy days hit thick tangles of vines, briars and any type of cover that protects rabbits from the elements.

Brush piles are good on just about



Mark Friend, from Letart, went out West for this 5X5 elk.

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any given day. If you jump a rabbit near a brush pile on a windy day, the pile will be the first place it will scurry back towards.

Another great location regardless of weather is an overgrown old apple orchard. Add tall grass, plenty of old brush piles and soon an old cottontail should be spotted.

continue to the next page



Scott Beverly hunted in Harrison County for this buck..

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The great thing about old orchards is they are easy to hunt without a dog.

Often the hunter will jump a rabbit and if a quick shot fails, then cutting over to your side will often result in a second shot as the rabbit puts some distance between you and him. They only run in a



Steve White, from Hico, hunted in Fayette County for this 8 point.

straight line for a short distance before bouncing to the side.

Old farms with plenty of abandoned machinery or rundown buildings are another good spot for the hunter without the services of a hound. Once again look for the rabbits tight to cover. Tall grass is often found in these abundant areas offering protection from hunters as well as hawks.

Move very slowly while stomping and kicking any piece of cover that could conceal a rabbit. Two hunters can work as a team in this type of cover. One hunter should post up after anticipating where a rabbit might run.

The other hunter slowly pokes around the old machinery. Maintaining a safe distance between each other will almost always spell defeat for the rabbit!

Don't leave that farm just yet. Hunting out fence rows can be productive as well. Rabbits normally



David Stowers bagged a big 8 point. Photo courtesy of Dee's Sporting Goods in Hamlin.

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will follow the row to the end and then take off on a streak for the nearest cover.

Pay close attention to the direction that it runs. This will give you a clue for future outings on a good stand location. Rabbits have their favorite escape routes and once you locate them they generally stay good for years.

An hourglass-shaped woodlot with prime habitat is another high-percentage location, and Christmas tree plantations are also always productive with or without a dog. DOGLESS METHODS

The best method for a single hunter is the stop-and-go method. Far too many hunters make the mistake

continue to the next page

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of moving too quickly, but in prime habitat I might only cover a couple of acres in a half hour.

As you might guess, I hunt rabbits similar to the way I stalk deer. I just stop and search each and every piece of cover before moving. Five yards, another slap in the face from the briar tangle. Stop and look, move another five or ten.

As for hunting with a partner, a favorite hunting technique my son Eric and I use involves posting a hunter on stand. I like to have him stand at the end of a fence row. The best locations are at intersections of two fence rows or where a thicket necks down into a tree line or any type of bottleneck.

Often the posted hunter will get the most opportunities and harvest the most rabbits. On one hunt Eric had to reload quickly after dusting off a pair of rabbits. Often doubles or triples end up scurrying down

their emergency exit.

When you come across a brush-pile one hunter should take a stand that offers the best opportunity for an open shot while the other jumps on the pile.

When hunting with a couple of others it pays off to place a hunter or two on a stand. If you are hunting a Christmas tree plantation, an old orchard or long fence line, have a hunter stand near the end while the other hunters work their way



Chris Smith brought in a good buck. Photo courtesy of Clark's Taxidermy in Parkersburg.

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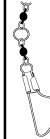
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toward him.

This also works well with thickets, cattail marshes and brushy fields. Many times the rabbits will run well ahead of the drivers without the hunters even being aware that a rabbit has flushed.

HUNTING WITH DOGS

Hunting with a Beagle offers some fast-action shooting. Often the rabbit takes off as if in a hundred-yard dash. Shots can be tricky but if you're patient the shots on the return trip are easier.

If the rabbit doesn't hole up, the patient hunter who remains still on his stand will be rewarded with an easy shot. Often once the rabbit places some distance between himself and the hound he will stop and look back. These are the best opportunities for a hunter with a .22 rifle. A sitting or very slow-moving rabbit makes for some fun plink-

continue to the next page

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ing.
 When the kill is not of any importance I head for either an old orchard or a pine tree plantation. Try and find a spot with a bit of elevation and take a stand. Let one hunter and the hound do much of the work.

Often it's a toss up on who jump the most rabbits between the pusher and the Beagle. Either way, in short order a rabbit will be bounding its way ahead of the pack.

Hunting the pine trees is fairly easy. There are usually two-tracks about every ten rows of trees. Stay fairly close to these and when the dog lets out, hustle to the opening.

The rabbit normally runs a short distance down the rows and then makes a hard turn. If you are in position when the rabbit cuts the opening, a quick open shot will present itself. When using a Beagle it's best to let the dog do much of

the work.

Walk slowly and keep your eyes peeled for any sudden movement. When the dog takes off on a hot trail it's best for all of the hunters to spread out. On a good day the rabbit will run a complete circle.

But because rabbits can be as unpredictable as a Beagle, nothing can be for sure. This makes for some fun shooting as the rabbit makes its way across the rows of trees.

Rabbits have a tendency to run in an erratic manner. Rarely do they run in a straight line. This is the beauty of hunting an orchard or a pine tree plantation.

LOCATING PRIME RABBIT COUNTRY

Much of the best rabbit hunting takes place on private property. The best way to locate a prime piece of property starts with a slow drive. Ride around taking note of the cover, terrain and food sources, the latter being among the most important.

No food, no rabbits — just that

simple. Farm crops always draw rabbits and the closer to thick cover the better.

Grapes, berries, red osier dogwoods, fruit trees, young saplings and just about anything that they can sink their teeth into are all favorite foods. Rabbits love to eat

continue to the next page



Nick Stevens went to Calhoun County for this quality 11 point.

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anything that is green, but once the green stuff is gone, look out! Any twig or small tree is fair game.

They will girdle a fruit tree overnight. People who make a living off of the land are not very fond of rabbits because of the damage the rodents cause. Any place that you see fruit trees would be a good place to check out.

Once a prime piece is located then some friendly conversation is in order. Sometimes all it takes is a knock on the door and a smiling face to gain permission to some great private property for rabbit hunting. Take your son or daughter along when seeking permission to hunt and leave the hunting clothes at home.



Johnny Ward got a big buck. *Photo courtesy of Three Rivers Edge in Hinton.*



This hunter shot a great buck. *Photo courtesy of Sun Valley Country Store in Speedway.*

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Rena Zirkle used a bow for this 8 point buck. *Photo courtesy of Jerry's Sporting Goods in Horner.*



Carl Goodby shot a wide racked 8 point buck. *Photo courtesy of Water-front Sporting Goods in Alderson.*

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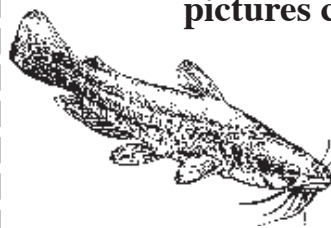
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