

N. J. Periodical

New Jersey

FREE PUBLIC LIBRARY
TRENTON, NEW JERSEY

DEC 27 1971

REFERENCE
DEPARTMENT

Outdoors



December, 1971

NED SMITH

THE LOGGERS' OLD HORSE

J. Joseph Gribbins

The bells in the distance rang frosty and clear
And wool-shirted woodsmen extended an ear;
To the cotton soft thud of hoofs on the snow
As the old horse went by with his head bending low.
No sleigh bells resounded, no laughter, no fun
Just a weary old horse trotting home on the run;
Through the snow-covered trails, dim and dark in the trees
Passing many a pond that had started to freeze.
The stable was cold but the straw-littered ground
Was as welcome as Santa Claus, soon to come 'round;
The Loggers' old horse snuggled down with a heave
Seeking much needed comfort on this Christmas Eve.

He had just closed his eyes when Old Santa appeared
With his reindeer who snorted and whistled and reared;

"Come out here, old horse; Take hold of this sleigh
My Dasher is sick. I must get away."

The numbness of labor a short time before?

It left the old horse as he glanced out the door;

He jumped to his feet — With a tug of the bolt

He swerved from his stall with the pace of a colt.

With a lump in his throat and a feeling of pride

He stood bravely by Dancer, with quivering hide;

The bell-laden harness stretched over his back

While Santa Claus grinned and grabbed at his pack.

"On Ginger, On Dancer, On Comet, Let's go
We're a half hour late and we cannot be slow;"

The Loggers' old horse leaped forward in stride

Flushed by his role on this Christmas Eve ride.

The moon bowed in tribute far up in the sky

And stars danced the polka as Santa whisked by;

Clouds meshed together and formed a straight road

To encourage old Ginger and lighten his load.

And all through the night while little ones dozed

The Loggers' old horse tugged and tarried and froze;

The reindeer in turn were as pleased as could be

And admired the old horse and his great dignity.

When the sleigh became light and the sun raised its head

They returned to the stable and Santa Claus said:

"A mighty fine job and thanks once again

Your good deed tonight will be loved by all men."

But later when midday shone high in the skies

They found that old Ginger had failed to arise;

He had made his last trip on this earthly domain

And went straight to his heaven — and glory and fame.

Each year when the spirit of Christmas arrives

And happiness brightens the course of our lives;

Just look in the eyes of a horse and there find

The reason why they are so helpful and kind.

State of New Jersey

William T. Cahill
Governor

**Department of Environmental
Protection**

Richard J. Sullivan
Commissioner

**Division of Fish, Game, and
Shell Fisheries**

Russell A. Cookingham
Director

Fish and Game Council

Raymond Baker,
Monmouth Jctn. ('73)

John B. Cavagnaro,
Vineland ('75)

E. Anthony Delgado,
Vineland ('74)

George H. Demarest,
Hillsdale ('75)

Randle N. Faunce,
Delanco ('74)

Neal Munch,
Freehold ('75)

Raymond T. Richardson,
Port Monmouth ('72)

Joseph Schollenberger,
Holmdel ('72)

Steven Tezap,
Clifton ('73)

Al Toth,
North Brunswick ('72)

Charles Webber,
Westwood ('73)

Public Relations

William E. Peterman,
Supervisor

Law Enforcement

John C. O'Dowd,
Chief

Wildlife Management

George N. Alpaugh,
Chief of the Bureau

Fisheries Management

Robert A. Hayford,
Chief of the Bureau



New Jersey Outdoors is published monthly by the New Jersey Division of Fish, Game, and Shell Fisheries of the Department of Environmental Protection in the interest of the natural resources of fisheries and wildlife and the betterment of hunting and fishing in New Jersey.

In This Issue

The Loggers' Old Horse Inside Front Cover

Midnight of the Year 2

Six Bucks 7

Deer Dilemma 14

Not by Guns Alone 16

Buck or Doe 18

Venison 25

Fur, Fin, and Campfire 27

Age and Points 28

Age of Deer 29

For Squirrels 30

Cover — "An Alert Ten-pointer" — Ned Smith

A ten-point, white-tailed buck deer standing tense and alert is enough to arouse any hopeful New Jersey nimrod on a frosty December morning. For more on white-tails see page 7.

Vol. 22, No. 6

December, 1971

Publication Office: Room 702, Labor Building, John
Fitch Way Plaza, Trenton, N. J. 08625

Mailing Address: P. O. Box 1809, Trenton, N. J. 08625

Editor: R. Adams

Second-class postage paid Trenton, N. J. 08608, and additional mailing office.

Subscription: \$3.00 a year, by check or money order, payable to New Jersey Outdoors. Cash is forwarded at senders risk. No stamps please.

Change of address: Should be reported directly to the Editor. Send both old and new address. The Post Office will not forward copies unless forwarding postage is provided by subscriber. Copies not delivered through failure to send change of address six weeks in advance cannot be replaced.

All unsolicited material is sent to the magazine at the risk of the sender.

Permission granted to reprint with credit to New Jersey Outdoors.

The Midnight of the Year

by JOHN H. DAY



December comes once again to the countryside. The outdoorsman notes the driving snow fleeing out of the North and hears the keening wind-music in the upper air. The knives and axes of Winter are being honed to razor edge. Soon the sun will be flirting with Capricorn and the dark days of the winter solstice will shroud the woodlands in brooding mystery.

The old Romans identified this first month of Winter with their goddess Vesta, the deity of the hearth. When they felt the chill breath of the "tenth" month all hands became concerned with the kindling and maintenance of a perpetual fire for the common use. December has kindled a different fire in the hearts of men during the later Christian era. The Saxons knew it as the holy month.

The Winter Skies

The countryman cannot help but turn his eyes to the night skies above as December comes rolling down the calendar. It is now that the heavens

begin to declare the glory in majestic spectacles that will stud the wintry skies with breathless beauty until the new year nears the Spring break-up.

The countryman greets these astral performers as old friends. He steps out during the late evening for a "breather" and finds that the upper air has been swept clean of all haze. The vast dark dome seems to close in on the countryside while the sparkling procession blazes on through the frosty night. The big dipper, which stood high in the sky all Summer, is now well down on the northern horizon.

The Hunter Orion

While the show is dominated by the great hunter Orion eternally stalking the bull Taurus, the outdoorsman passes up this feature attraction for more favored, if less brilliant constellations. Well up in the eastern sky stands the Pleiades, a shimmering star-group which has been popular with star gazers down the centuries.

The Seven Sisters, as the Greeks knew this cluster, have tried the eye-

sight of many generations. Normal vision can usually place six stars with some degree of certainty while the sharp-eyed can sort out seven and maybe one or two more. Many primitive peoples began their year when the Pleiades crossed the meridian at midnight in November. It is said that at this hour the group is visible through the mysterious southward-pointing passage of the Great Pyramid.

Speed of Light

The countryman rubs his eyes, makes out six stars in the cluster, and finds it hard to believe that this "little" group occupies a volume of space so vast that the light from a star on the outer rim would take some 35 years to cross through and reach the opposite edge. This light, of course, would be traveling at the normal speed of six million million miles per year.

Almost overhead the outdoorsman finds another favorite picture in the December sky. This is the ball diamond, the great "square" in the constellation Pegasus, which looks like a huge rectangular hole in the star pattern. It requires a vivid imagination to place a flying horse in the star picture based on the great square, but the ancient star-gazers were not worried too much about realities. They had to squeeze all the gods and monsters of the old folk-tales into their sky charts. Navigators have made good use of two of the stars in the square for centuries.

Just before the sun came up in early August, a dazzling bright star greeted early risers from the horizon in the southeast. This was Sirius, the dog

star, heralding arrival of the sweltering "dog days." Since then this brightest of all stars has risen four minutes earlier each day until now the countryman finds it hanging low in the southeast as he takes his final look-around before turning in for the night.

The ancient shepherds knew well this brilliant object. Only one of the wandering planets can outshine the great dog star. There are two other stars which draw the countryman's attention as he watches the Winter sky panorama. These are the heavenly twins Castor and Pollux which lie at the outside corners of a long wedge in the sky pointing directly at the hunter Orion. This wedge can be seen when the moonlight has "paled" out the neighboring stars, which make up the constellation Gemini.

The "Standstill"

December comes again to the countryside, preserving the dormant life of the fields and woods in its deep freeze lockers. Beneath the apparent "standstill" of the wild world at rest the countryman is aware of life forces on the march, pressing toward the release of the lengthening days in March and April. And as he waits and ponders on these immutable things he looks into the December night skies and wonders even more.

When the sun finally takes a stand at the Winter solstice and turns back to spearhead the driving Springtide the countryman knows that the midnight of another year is at hand. The shortest day marks low twelve in the Winter woodlands. But even though the old weather seers found that "as

the days begin to lengthen then the cold begins to strengthen," the countryman sees the solstice as a point of departure toward better days.

The welcome mat was out as I returned to the timbered "hollow" to help celebrate the arrival of another December. I paused for a breather among the few scraggly lilacs which mark the dooryard where once a log house stood. The house has long since mouldered away to a low mound and a few foundation stones. As I stood on this "threshold" to the hill country a pair of nuthatches came swooping across as official greeters.

An Inspection

These gymnasts performed all over the cluster of cherry trees which have succeeded the parent tree set there years ago. They hung head downward and inspected me with beady eyes before exploring casually along the under side of a branch, like a fly walking on the ceiling.

The northern slopes still harbored the light snow which had fallen during the night, but the hillsides facing the south lay warm and brown beneath the brief December sun. I walked out to the edge of the rim surrounding the hollow, then headed straight down through the old-field tangles to the timbered ravines.

There was a great company of cheerful brown birds feeding in the weedy edges of the thickets. These were the tree sparrows, newly arrived from the nesting grounds in the far north. No matter how severe the weather they have a great time as they feed along the fence rows or across weedy bottoms. About the same size

as the common house sparrow, they wear a tell-tale "stickpin" on the breast, and noticeable wing bars.

A Chipmunk's Dignity

Just as I neared an aging section of stake and rider fence which wanders among the trees a plump chipmunk, who should have been snug abed below decks, scurried ahead of me and disappeared in a hollowed and weathered snag. He scrambled about four feet up inside this hideout, never noticing that a half-inch of his tail stuck out through a traitorous crack. When I grabbed that tiny appendage the hullaballo inside the weathered snag left me weak with laughter.

After I relased him the chipmunk elected to hide in the snag. My walking stick probed into a crack and pried out a narrow section some five feet long. The effect was as though I had cut a window into the hollow retreat. The chipmunk scooted out and onto the rail fence. The last I saw of him he was tearing along at a rapid clip, that outraged tail standing straight up in injured dignity.

Deer Mice At Home

A tiny winter castle had been built into the upper reaches of the hollow snag. It was like a gray blanket, woven of feathers and thistle-down and other soft and warm fibers. Snuggled down in this cozy den, with the covers literally over their heads, were a pair of white-footed mice.

I know of no more beautiful animal in our woodlands than this little deer mouse. Fawn-colored above, and white as purest ermine below, with tiny white boots on his tiny feet, he

always ranks among the ten best dressed members of the ancient order of hibernators.

I disturbed these bundlers long enough for one of the sleepy pair to nestle in the palm of my hand and regard me timorously with his big black eyes. Before he came awake enough to protest I returned him carefully to the nest and wedged the narrow strip securely back in place. I hope the snag den will be big enough to house the new arrivals who will be along in time to greet the returning Springtide.

Beeches and Greens

The woodlands were not without their own holiday decorations. A large colony of the evergreen Christmas fern has established headquarters on a wide sloping bank edging a tiny brook. Spotted about with Nature's artistry against the white background were many of these green fronds. Almost in the exact center of this bank stands a rotting stub-stump perhaps four feet high. A baker's dozen of the large bracket fungi have moved in on this stump, and were quite decorative as seen from the down-hill angle. Here in the depths of the brooding Winter woods was a natural arrangement far better balanced and more effective than any artificial flummery.

There are many tall trim beech trees in this timberland. The countryman holds these gray patriarchs in high esteem and is conscious of an instinctive awareness of kinship with the ancient tree worshippers as he walks among these graybears "standing like Druids of eld in the twilight."

Many of these trees bear carved autographs cut there years ago by eager youngsters. The countryman wonders how many of those hands lie idle now, though still remembered so long as the timber stands in that quiet woodland.

The outdoor picture contains many delicate tracteries which are only to be seen when the snow carpet lies warm and white across the ground. Where the juncoes and tree sparrows have been feeding the snow is stenciled with their beautiful fugitive trails. Many of the fruit-laden weed stalks hold their heads above the snow, revealing a striking design pattern. Vervain is one of these, and some of the latter mints, and the sweet cicely.

Memories and Musings

As the old year finishes the course and a lusty youngster picks up the pace, the countryman finds himself emulating Janus, the two-headed Roman god who looked both into the past and the future, and for whom our first month is named. A long and wistful backward look calls to mind pleasant days astream, with the trout rising and the painted trillium nodding on the mountainside. Many other red-letter days pass in review, when the veery sang at the bog's edge, the gentian bloomed in the upland marsh, and the cedarbirds held Quaker meeting in the applesauce tree.

To the man who walks the wayside trails the future is always out front and always exciting. Perhaps this coming year he'll find that hummingbird's nest. He might even take that big brownie from the long pool below the old mill dam. Who knows?



NED SMITH

December incidents

in the lives of

SIX BUCKS

By NEAL HERON

THE SIX DAYS of the regular deer season in New Jersey were eventful days for six bucks in widely scattered sections of the state. For some of the bucks they were days of uncertainty; for others they were days of finality.

The Woods Buck

The alert ten-pointer paused at the edge of an old-growth oak woods in the flat lands of central Jersey. It was well after dawn. But, the buck had not heard a single gun boom in the nearby fields. Several weeks of upland gunning season had conditioned him to the frequent crack of nitro. Now the silence was ominous.

Yet, men were in the woods. The buck could sense their presence. He saw a group of hunters skirting the woods; he heard an occasional probing whistle; and, he smelled tobacco and gun oil. The buck was much too uneasy to continue his morning feeding. Instead he stood almost motionless for many minutes. Only his brown and white tail flicked nervously.

About ten minutes before the sun rose—men would say it was shortly after seven a. m. on opening day of the deer season—a shot shattered the stillness. As though triggered by the initial blast, guns near and far spoke sporadically. Intuition seemed to warn the buck that the heavy concussions were made by something more than field loads. Still the buck held his position.

Then sounds of stealthy rustlings and the muffled cracklings moved toward him. Close upon the sounds of the approaching men came the strong scent of woolen-clothed hunters just commencing to perspire; the waxy odor of fresh shotgun shells; and, the clean pungence of unfired guns.

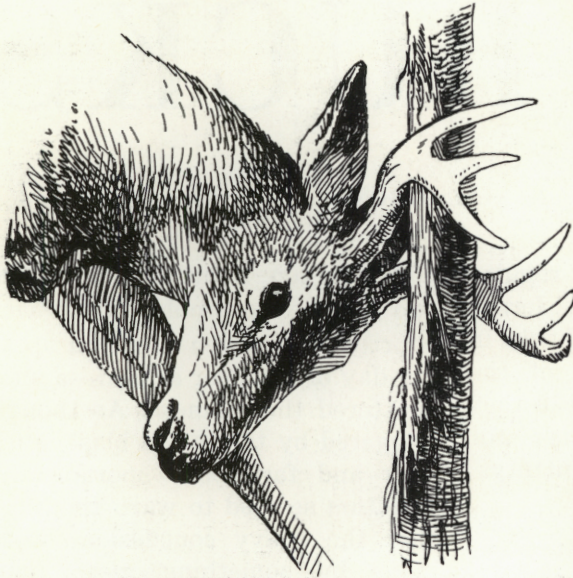
With a start the buck stiffened to the unemotional memory of the last time he scented these warnings. On that day, about a year ago, he had tarried to see what brought the strange smells and had almost paid with his life.

By this day however, experience

. . . Six Bucks

had etched its pattern. Without even raising his tail the great stag faded into the depths of the big woods. Here he would remain in

curiosities. Then, as the deer increased, he tolerated them as innocuous, free-loading boarders; eventually, when they became numerous, he came to detest the deer as unwanted pests with insatiable



*The buck thrashed
the small tree*

seclusion until many days after the last deer hunter had left his border-land feeding grounds.

The Estate Buck

Along the edge of a thicket on a private estate in northeast Jersey a sleek, eight-point buck indifferently nibbled a few red maple shoots. He was not particularly hungry after heavily browsing on yew trees and other choice shrubs of the land owner. For two seasons the buck had grown fat, and even careless, living in the lush, protected confines of the estate.

At one time, maybe 25 years ago, when the deer were few in numbers, the estate owner welcomed and enjoyed the deer as

appetites. The proprietor nevertheless, persisted in protecting his not-so-welcome beasties from open hunting. Finally, with another deer season approaching he relented and invited friends to hunt his lands on this Tuesday.

The buck did notice a bit more activity about the grounds and heard strange sounds early on this day. But, he paid scant heed. Being well-fed and secure, he was feeling his oats. Possibly he still carried memories of the recent rutting period. At any rate he began to hook and rub savagely a newly planted ornamental sapling.

So intent was the buck in his noisy mock-battle with his expen-

sive, but defenseless, opponent, that he failed to hear the approach of the hunter. The buck flailed and whacked the small tree; the hunter eased up to within 30 yards. The buck never even heard the shot.

The Piney Buck

With a sharp snort the piney woods buck leaped from his day bed. But, he did not bound away; he kept his place in his scrub oak covert. There was no mistaking what he had heard. It was the stealthy movement of a party of men down-wind on the woods road.

From the sounds filtering to him the buck knew what was taking place, out of sight and beyond his scenting powers. As the Indian file of hunters from the South Jersey deer club trekked along the logging road, men were dropping off at

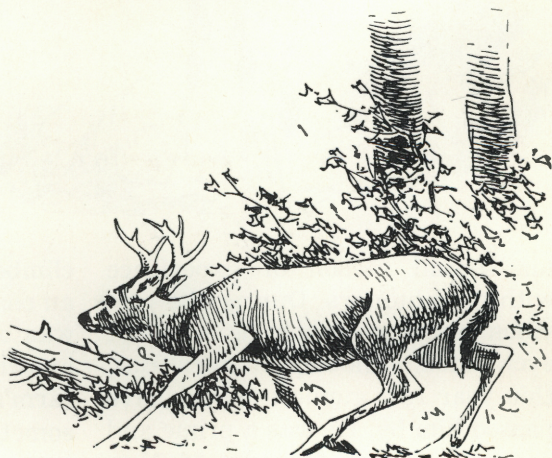
his strategy planned—he had survived three previous seasons of drives.

As the men on stand on the road were now quiet, and since they were down-wind, he could not tell exactly where each one was waiting. Thus if he attempted to escape in that direction he would be at a serious disadvantage.

But, coming from the other direction, with the wind and making a great din, the drivers were easily tracked on his private brand of radar. He would use his scrub oak cover and the intervening pine tree boles as a screen. Unless a hunter stumbled directly to his hideaway, he was safe.

The uproar of the drive quickly grew. Added to its general noise was the crack and crackle of break-

*Tail pressed down
he sneaks off*



strategic locations to take stands for the deer drive to come.

Within a short time the buck heard the start of the drive with its rising and falling clamor of hoots and shouts. The buck had

ing twigs and brush as the hunters rapidly approached. Keeping ever so low, the buck almost crouched behind his cover. As the nearest hunter passed bellowing on his way; the buck practically crawled

. . . Six Bucks

around to the protected side of the scrub and, tail pressed down, he pussy-footed off and away. He knew of a trackless cedar swamp that even the deer drives seldom penetrated.

The Farm Buck

The farm buck was much younger than his size and six-point antlers might indicate. This was only

the adjacent fields or orchards where he had become a downright nuisance to the hardworking farmer and his farm neighbors.

Although the farmer and his two boys had not, because of the press of pre-winter chores, been able to hunt the first three days of the season, they were out in force this early afternoon. The farmer took to a tree stand in the south wood lot; his younger son



*He froze, raised
his white flag*

his second season of experience with deer hunters. During the previous hunting season he had not even rated a shot by hunters. But, this year few gunners would have passed him by. He was a prime and desirable target for any of New Jersey's deer hunters.

The wood lots and farmed fields in the rolling hills of central Jersey had been good to him. He had only to travel from his bed ground in the woods to bountiful fodder in

climbed into one at the far end of an osage orange row. The older son was already ambling through the known daytime haunts of the farm's deer herd, trying to stir up something.

The six-pointer of the hedgerows heard, then shortly after saw, the young farmer nonchalantly walking toward his bed. As on many past occasions when the farm folks disturbed his slumbers, the young buck now rose indifferently and

stretched. Alert, but not panicky, he quick-stepped out of the woods. He headed for the corner where the osage orange row provided a runway to his alternate bedding grounds.

The buck stepped along high and openly at a brisk pace, oblivious to the omnipresent scent of farm people. Too late, much too late, he froze, raised his white flag in alarm, as he heard the metallic click of the gun's safety.

The Bay Buck

Way down south in one of the mixed woods bathed by the warm, moist air of Delaware Bay, the fork-horn buck was still recuper-

antlered bucks prevalent in his intended domain. As a consequence he had lost battles, harems, and weight.

The lost battles were now history. The gone harems were but memories. But, the weight was being rapidly regained. The buck fed almost continuously during his waking hours. Already he was again plump and full of life; but, he was still insatiably hungry.

The hunter from the town was able to get away from his job shortly after noon on Friday and with haste took to the woods. His favorite stand was on an old oak



*And the fork-horn
kept browsing*

ating from the recent tribulations of the rutting period. It had been his misfortune to encounter more than one of the long-tined, heavy

stump thickly shielded by coppice sprouts. Although he had little real hope of seeing a deer move in the early afternoon brightness, the

. . . Six Bucks

hunter stood patiently, but distractedly.

First his ears picked up the occasional but definite snap of twigs—no squirrel. Then, his eyes followed the progress of a movement in a sprout thicket. A swaying, a twitching of the dog-hair growth seemed to move steadily toward him. It could mean only a feeding deer. Was it a buck?

From behind a screening cluster of saplings and green briars the head of the fork-horn materialized. The buck greedily kept chewing and browsing. Just as he started to clip off a bud-laden twig the 12 pellets of the buckshot load were on their way.

The Forest Buck

For five days the forest buck had eluded the deer hunters—the tobacco-smoking sitters, “still hunters” making infernal rackets, a couple of poorly organized drives, and a good number of trail stompers. Not once had he been forced to run from his last-resort lair in the jumble of windfalls deep in the white pines and hemlocks on the mountain top in the northern country.

Early on opening day of deer season the buck had one moderately close call when he almost walked into a man sitting on a rock ledge. But, the cold morning air had carried to him a powerful draft of the intruder’s nervously puffed cigarette. After that, memories of past Decembers had been enough to cause the monarch to make dead

certain that he was back in his blow-down refuge long before the grey of dawn.

But, today, last day of the deer season, when more hunters than ever were in the forest, the old buck was uneasy. He hunkered down, hugging the brown needles beneath the thick second growth pines. All through the day he barely twitched an ear as stalkers, several drives, and whispering, but clumping, parties passed his sanctuary.

As the day drew toward evening and shadows commenced to flow out from the hemlock groves, the hunters were less to be scented and heard. The great white-tailed one raised his head, arched his neck—it felt good to move. Maybe the hunt was over for the day. And besides he was now conscious of being hungry. He rose stiffly, stretched one and then another hind leg.

Precisely placing his feet in the faint run leading into his refuge, the buck cautiously made his way out toward the community run that ran to the old, abandoned apple orchard. Then, a sinister glint of sun rays on a shiny gun barrel struck his eyes.

The hunter had seen the buck a couple of times during his regular Saturday grouse hunts on the mountain. All the day he had probed every possible hiding place he could find. Finally, he had painstakingly traced the buck’s outsize tracks to the inconspicuous trail going to the blow-down.

Inch by inch, minute by minute,

the hunter threaded his way toward the jumble of logs and pines—and the moving buck. The unexpected flush of a grouse from a near-

The reflection of light from the gun metal started the great buck. He wheeled and leaped powerfully over the nearest down tree, putting



He wheeled and leaped powerfully over the nearest down tree

by hemlock compelled the hunter to turn and half raise his gun in reflex action. And, the dying sun found the polished blue of his gun.

a plumed pine of many branches between himself and danger. His white tail flash may, or may not, have been seen by the hunter. #

THE USE OF BUCKSHOT FOR DEER

The only legal firearm missiles for deer in New Jersey are buckshot fired from 10 or 12 gauge shotguns. The use of buckshot only is required, essentially, because of the density of population, hunting pressure, and the built-up nature of our state. Truly, it is somewhat regrettable that we can not use rifles for deer. But, safety must be considered. However, buckshot can be mighty effective for deer hunting as attested by the annual firearms harvest of over 8,000 deer in New Jersey. The secret, if there be such a thing, of using buckshot on deer is to use the heaviest safe load in a reliable gun and preferably keep all shots within 35 yards, or at the very most 50 yards.

DEER Dilemma

DEER ARE the same as African violets or houseflies, give 'em enough to eat and a little elbow room and they go to town—seem to want to inherit the earth. It's essentially a matter of feed. Agricultural lands offer both variety and quantity for deer. Crop residues are chock-full of calories to keep 'em fat and minerals and vitamins to make 'em grow—and reproduce.

Corn, soybeans, and cereal grains left after harvest are used by deer and other wildlife and without objection from farmers. But excessive pasturing and trampling of the same crops while growing can be a nuisance, and it sometimes accompanies mushrooming deer populations.

In addition to the cash crops, alfalfa, clover, and improved pastures help make the agricultural environment home-sweet-home for whitetails. Also, farms offer an abundance of browse plants, which in forest areas are the basic diet for these browsers. Abandoned orchards have sprout growth in profusion and deer love it.

By contrast, forest areas vary greatly in their value for deer. Following logging or burning, wood-

land tracts can have a high carrying capacity because tender browse is there in quantity. But as the trees mature, they have little value as deer food. And, that's when the trouble starts.

High deer populations which built up during early growth stages of the woods become literally trapped as the trees mature. Unless flexibility in hunting regulations permits a closer cropping of herds under such conditions, nature steps in. Her ways are ruthless. First, production is cut back. And, then, in some sections there is malnutrition, which is reflected in small, scrawny deer and poorly developed antlers. In other areas the problem is created when conflict with man results as deer move out of the woods in great numbers to feed on crops. And it continues as long as there is too little feed in the woods for too many deer.

In the present day of game shortages, it is refreshing to have one popular game species wherein the principal problem is one of overabundance. It hardly makes sense not to take full advantage of it, especially since it is to everyone's advantage—including the deer. #

*Give 'em enough to eat
a little elbow room
and they go to town.*

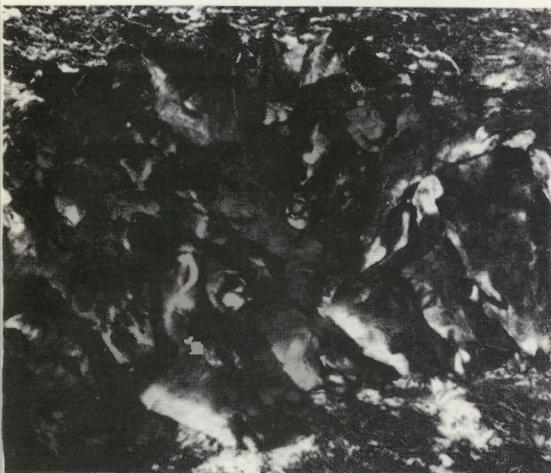


not by guns alone . . .

ALL deer are not killed by the guns and bows of hunters

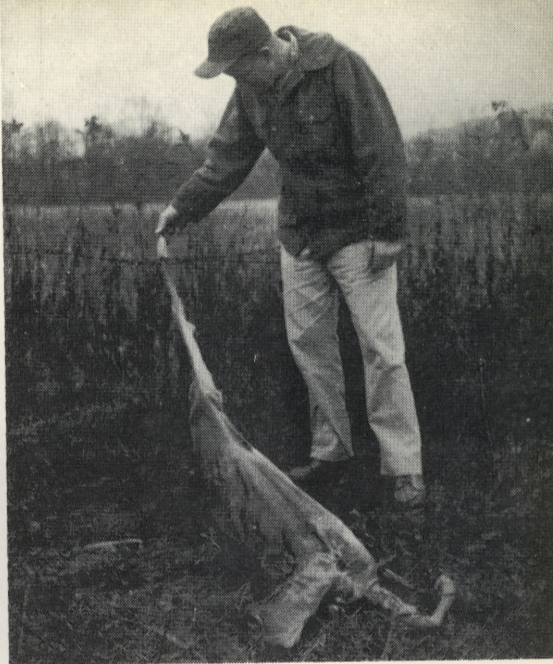
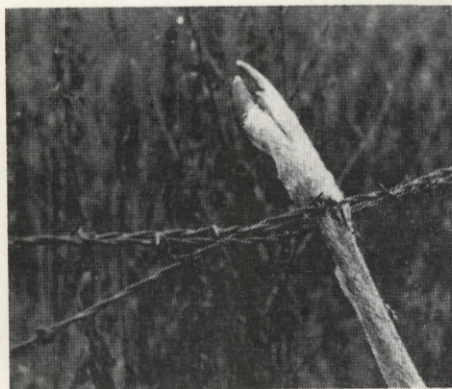


Death by automobile takes the largest number of deer killed in accidents. Of the several thousand deer killed accidentally each year, the Division manages to salvage about 2,500 for venison. The heads, at left, are from one day's salvage

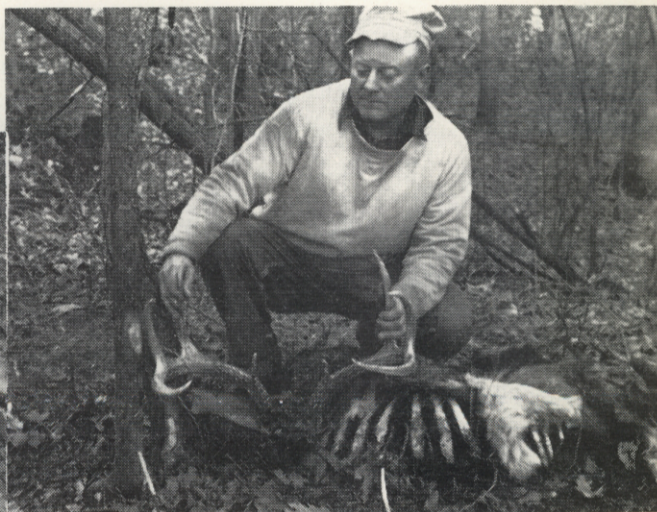


Disease undoubtedly takes a toll of deer, as above. But only during the epidemic of 1955 has evidence shown disease to be significant. But, a tragically high number of deer, especially fawns, are killed by dogs—usually pets and not wild dogs

While not a pretty sight, these pictures do show that deer die deaths, much harsher than that of being quickly dispatched by hunters. The sad fact is that most of the meat of such deer is lost and is wasted



The deer above tried to jump the three-strand barbed wire fence when its foot became tangled between the strands. The deer died a lonely and lingering death



A fine buck, the remains of which are shown above, apparently wedged his antlers between the saplings and slowly succumbed to merciless starvation. This freak accident is quite similar to the common tragedy of bucks interlocking antlers in combat

Deer Tracks

BUCK or DOE?

By DR. FREDERICK H. WESTON

Photographs by JAMES W. METLER

Courtesy *Texas Game and Fish*

TAKE THIS TEST



If you think you can identify the sex of a deer by its tracks take a look at the feet pictured at right. Score yourself before reading the article. The answers are to be found in the text

"THAT," said the old-line deer hunter, pointing to the track in the soft soil, "was made by a buck. It was a small buck, about half the size of the doe that made this track," he added, pointing to another track adjacent.

Shown a third track, he identified it without hesitation. "Now that was a fair-sized buck."

Thus, he unwittingly joined others like himself of long hunting experience in providing information on whether tracks can be used to identify positively and consistently the sex of the deer which made them. He was wrong in each instance, but he was not alone in his error. Others who claimed they could positively identify a buck by his tracks had made the same mistakes.

The tracks were not made by deer. They were made by man using the feet of dead deer. In the

first instance, the tracks were made using the feet of a doe which hog-dressed at forty-seven pounds. The tracks were made to appear as if the animal had stepped in a bare patch of soil while walking. A photograph of one of the front feet used appears as Figure 1.

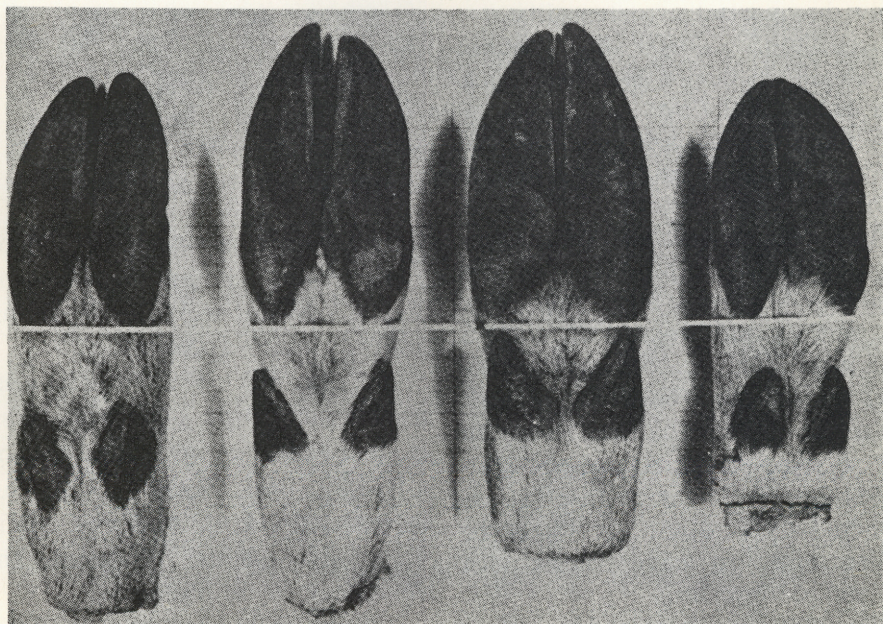
In the second instance, the tracks were made using the feet of a buck killed on a softer-soiled range which hog-dressed at sixty-five pounds. It, too, was made to appear to be walking across the same opening. A photograph of one of the front feet used appears as Figure 2.

In the third instance, the tracks were made using the feet of a doe which hog-dressed at sixty-four pounds. In this case, the tracks were made to appear as if the ani-

mal had been running with the hoofs spread and imprints of dew-claws showing. A photograph of one of the front feet used appears as Figure 3.

Only those hunters who said they could positively identify the sex of a deer by its tracks were tricked into this small-scale experiment. This little fun notwithstanding, the fact is that tracks made by deer do not give positive identification as to the sex of the maker.

The white-tailed deer exists on ranges varying ecological types. The different soils of the ranges they occupy alter the size and shape of their feet. Those living on ranges of clay, sand, or other softer soils are more likely to have longer and more pointed hoofs than those



A

B

C

D

. . . Buck or Doe ?

existing on rocky ranges. Food, too, creates changes, as does age and the effects of the various seasons.

The 2½-year-old doe whose foot appears in Figure 1 was not completely grown and lived on a rocky range on a near-starvation diet. Her feet were smaller and more worn than was the fully grown doe whose feet appears in Figure 3, and who existed on a range of softer soils on a better diet. The buck whose foot appears in Figure 2 was a first-time breeder in the 1½ to 2½-year-old class who existed on a sandy range drouth-shy of browse. Even so, there is a great variation in the size and shape of the feet of individual deer occupying the same general area, probably due partially to heredity.

Age, too, makes a big change, especially in bucks. Before a buck mates for the first time, his feet are longer and more pointed. As he gets ready to mate, he paws at scrapes. When he is with a doe in the rutting season, he paws constantly at her. Both activities cause wear on his front feet. Then, too, he carries the weight of antlers and a swollen neck during the rutting season which puts more weight on his front feet than a doe has to carry. This in turn causes more spreading and wear than a doe experiences. This, too, is likely to cause bucks to leave tracks with deeper toe imprints.

The older and heavier his antlers and the more swollen the neck be-

comes, the more obvious is this wear. This progressive wear is illustrated in Figures 4, 5, 6, and 7.

In 4, the buck was in the 1½ to 2½-year-old class. As a probable first time breeder, his hoofs show little wear.

In 5, the buck was in the 2½ to 3½-year-old class. He possibly was in his third rutting season, and wear on his hoofs is beginning to show.

In 6, the buck was in the 4½ to 5½-year-old class and thus pos-

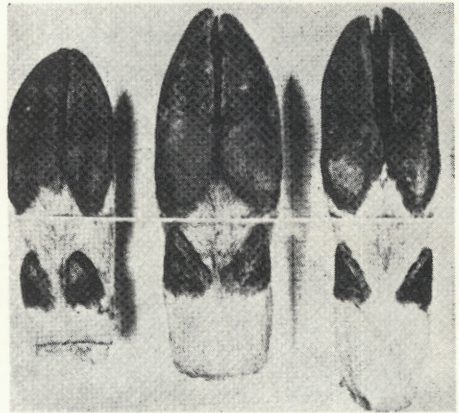


Fig. 1

Fig. 2

Fig. 3

sibly in his fifth season of rutting and carrying a larger set of antlers and a swollen neck. Wear on his hoofs is quite apparent.

In 7, the buck was an old moss-back beyond the 5½-year-old class. He had a massive set of antlers and a bull-like neck to wield them. This increased weight and his many breeding seasons produced the obvious wear on his hoofs.

Larger and older bucks, therefore, generally have a wider and

more round front foot and leave tracks with deeper toe prints than do does. Both bucks and does have smaller and more elongated hind feet. This can be readily seen in Figure 8. In each set of feet, the hind foot appears on the right and the front foot on the left. (A), (B), (C), and (D) are bucks while (E) and (F) are does. The tracks of front feet, then, should be used in any attempt to identify the sex of the maker.

Larger and older bucks may drag their feet to leave marks along their trails. The marks appear as lines, either in the soil over which the animal passes or in the

footprint to footprint. Evidence of drag marks is difficult to detect unless the soil over which the animal passes is soft, muddy, or covered with snow. However, an experienced woodsman might detect drag marks by noting disturbances in the ground litter.

Here again, drag marks could be left by sick, weak, wounded, or crippled animals regardless of sex.

For the hunter who is interested in deer sign, including tracks, there is the matter of individual characteristics to consider. Like the fingerprint of man, a deer's foot has individual characteristics. Growth, abrasions, and regrowth

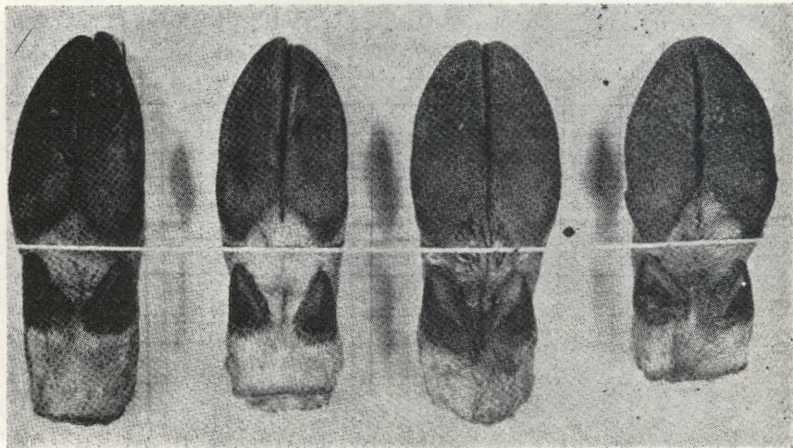


Fig. 4

Fig. 5

Fig. 6

Fig. 7

matter which covers it, such as ground mulch or snow. Drag marks, if present, will appear just in front of and behind the footprint. The softer the soil or the deeper the ground mulch is, the longer the drag marks will be. In snow, the marks can extend from

of the hoofs will alter their size and shape, and leave cracks, breaks, lines, and formations of all kinds on the front, edges, and soles of each hoof. Accidents and wounds, past and present, likewise will create individual features.

The feet shown in Figure 9 are

. . . Buck or Doe ?

good illustrations. The hind foot of a buck in (A) has shell-like edges to make the hoof concave, while one toe is abraded and shorter than

pad extending forward nipple-like half again as far to form a distinct ledge having a Y-shaped depression on its inner side and a serrated one on the outside which join across its middle to form a saddle. For-

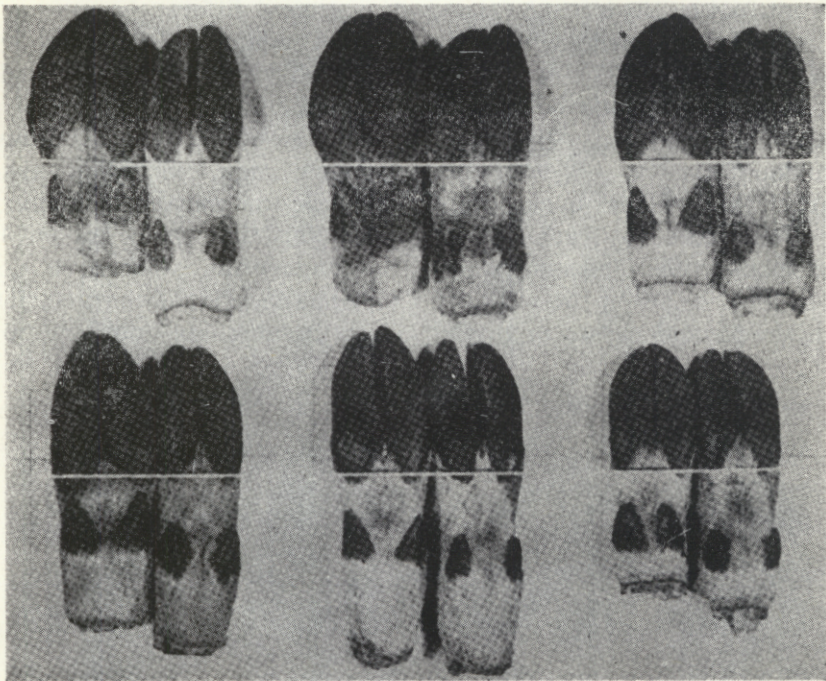


Figure 8

the other one and turns in. The outside toe, which appears on the left, has an oval depression just forward of the sole pad and a circular growth near the edge of the cleft line at about its center. All would show up in the tracks made by this animal.

The front foot of a buck in Figure 9 (B) has well-formed pads on the soles. However, the inside toe, which appears on the right, has a

ward of the saddle, is an irregular circular growth. These, too, would show up in the tracks made by this animal.

All deer walk by stepping with the hind foot approximately in the footprint made by the front foot on the same side. This is particularly true in the case of young deer whose leg length is greater in proportion than body length. The older and larger the deer gets, the more

this proportion is likely to become equal or reversed, and the shorter he may step with his hind feet. The same will be true of sick or wounded deer. Slight under- or overstepping by any deer will make the track look larger.

In the same manner, a young animal whose body has not reached its maximum width will walk with little separation between the paths of the feet of both sides. As age increases body width, the wider this



Figure 9

separation will become. According to Eugene A. Walker of the Texas Game and Fish Commission, Robert R. Ramsey, wildlife biologist, checked the tracks of an adult doe in November 1953 in Gillespie County, Texas, which had a lateral

separation of four inches. The author measured the tracks of a buck in La Salle County, Texas, in December, 1953, which had a lateral displacement of six inches.

The heavier a deer gets, the smaller the angle becomes between pastern and the ground. This brings the dewclaws closer to the ground. Heavier deer, then, are likely to leave imprints of dewclaws. Dewclaws on the front legs of bucks are closer to the hoofs than they are on does. Thus bucks, which are normally heavier than does and whose dewclaws are anatomically closer to the ground, are more likely to leave the imprint of dewclaws while walking.

There are many things which change a track of the *same* deer that the hunter also must consider. They include such things as the type of soil he moves on and its slope; the weather; and whether the animal is walking, trotting, galloping, or running; or is sick or wounded.

A deer walking uphill or on hard surface will make smaller and rounder tracks and will be less likely to leave dewclaw imprints. A deer walking in muddy or soft soil will leave larger tracks and is more likely to leave imprints of dewclaws. A trotting or running deer, or one walking downhill, will leave larger tracks because the hoofs are spread by shifting weight, and the tracks are made longer and thus slenderer by the sliding momentum. Here, too, dewclaw imprints are more likely to be left. The white-tailed deer is a rotary

. . . Buck or Doe ?

runner like a fox rather than a diagonal runner like a horse. His feet strike the ground in order as follows: right front foot, left front foot, left hind foot, then right hind foot. The hind feet strike the ground in front of the front feet, all in a relatively small area, usually leaving the imprint of dewclaws. However, the dewclaws on the hind feet are further from the hoofs than they are on the front feet and thus add to the confusion of the beginner by making the rear track appear to be larger.

In an unbiased consideration of these factors it therefore holds that there *are* characteristics by which, under certain conditions, tracks of does and bucks can be differentiated. By the same token, there are characteristics and conditions which reverse that which is expected. The hunter, then, may

apply the expected and assume the tracks he is observing were made by a buck or a doe, as the case may be, but he would do well not to bet heavily on his identification.

A doe may leave a track which contains all that is expected of a buck's track, and a buck may leave one having all that is expected of a doe's. Take the quiz illustration at the beginning of this article for example:

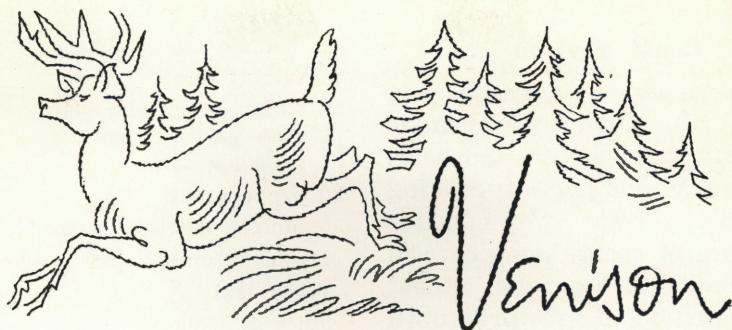
- (A) is a buck's hind foot.
- (B) is a doe's front foot.
- (C) is a buck's front foot.
- (D) is a doe's front foot.

No man, not even the most astute woodsman, can positively and consistently identify the white-tailed deer by its track alone. There are simply too many variable factors which, individually or collectively, prevent establishing a fool-proof pattern which can be applied to deer tracks for sex identification. #

TEN COMMANDMENTS FOR HUNTERS

1. Thou shalt not employ others to kill thy game for thee, or count game killed by thy neighbor.
2. Thou shalt speak to the farm owner in a gentle grace an entreat him to permit thy hunting on his premises, lest he boot thy north end from his domain.
3. Point not thy gun toward any living thing that thou dost not wish to slay. He who faileth to observe this is a King among Imbecils.
4. Aimeth not thy rod toward cattle, swine, or natives within one-fourth mile of thy nose-end. A farmer's pitchfork can causeth thee to eat thy meals, from a mantle.
5. Unload thy gun before thou enterest an auto. This will postpone thy and thy neighbor's funeral.
6. Take not thy gun by the muzzle. Then thy days are longer and thy creditors shall not be disinherited too soon.
7. Look not into the barrel of thy gun although it be empty. The undertaker can maketh a living without thy business before thy normal time.
8. Thou shalt not carry thy gun cocked. How can thy neighbor sit at thy welcome table when he is repete with buckshot.
9. Ascend not the fence with thy gun in hand. Saint Peter's job worketh him over-time and he draweth not time and a halfeth. Thy union might censure thee.
10. Observe all the above rules. The Happy Hunting Ground above to which thee aspires, is probably overcrowded with Indians sent by the Grandfather—and thy reception might leave much to be desired.

. . . from *Outdoors America*



Originally the term venison meant the meat of any animal or bird of the chase, but today it refers only to the meat of antlered animals — deer, elk, antelope, moose, reindeer. The venison of New Jersey is deer. The meat is lean and somewhat dry, but these characteristics can be corrected easily by adding a generous amount of fat and cooking only until rare or medium-rare. Roasts from young animals can be cooked like comparable beef roasts. Chops and steaks from young animals can be sautéed or broiled. Tougher cuts and the roasts, steaks, and chops from older animals should be tenderized with a marinade before they are cooked. Unless you are an expert and have the proper tools, have a meatman cut your deer like beef into roasts, steaks, chops, and stew meat. Have the fat trimmed completely. It is strongly flavored and should be replaced with fat salt pork.

Care of Venison

Draw, clean, and cool immediate-

ly. Spread cavity with a stick and hang by hind legs or antlers with or without hide (controversial points) until cooled. Transport, being careful not to heat animal. Hang or age in a cooler or in open air where temperature ranges between 36 and 40 degrees. Allow a week to firm the meat of young animals, two to three weeks for older animals. Remove hide (if still on) and carve into cuts similar to beef cuts. Cook immediately or wrap in freezer paper and store at 0° F.

Three Ways to Lard Venison

Before roasting venison, use the first or second method in combination with the third one to add fat.

1. Cut larding salt pork into long strips $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch wide; chill until firm. Thread a larding needle with a strip of pork and run the needle through the meat, inserting strips about 2 inches apart.

2. Pierce the meat with a long thin knife or a skewer and push strips of chilled larding pork into the incisions.

3. Wrap slices of larding pork around the meat and fasten it with string.

Roast Venison

Use a tender cut from the leg, loin, or rib. Lard and sprinkle with garlic salt, pepper, and flour. For accurate judging of cooking time, insert meat thermometer into center of roast, being careful not to let it touch a bone. Roast in preheated 350-degree oven until rare or medium-rare which gives the best flavor and most tender meat. Use reading on thermometer for beef or allow 20 to 25 minutes per pound. Baste frequently with melted bacon fat.

Broiled Venison

Use a tender cut from the loin or rib. Place steak or chops in broiler pan and broil 3 inches below heat source, basting frequently with melted butter and turning once. Time required depends on doneness desired and thickness of cut. A 2-inch steak, for example, cooks to medium-rare in 15 to 20 minutes. Season with garlic salt and pepper.

Marinated Venison

3 pounds venison (shoulder, neck, breast)
2 medium onions, sliced
1 carrot, sliced
2 stalks celery, chopped
1 clove garlic, crushed
1 teaspoon salt
10 peppercorns
5 juniper berries, crushed
1 tablespoon chopped parsley
1 bay leaf
Juice of 1 lemon
16 ounces desired liquid
½ cup salad oil

Remove skin, bones and tough tendons from meat; cut in 1½-inch pieces. Combine remaining ingredients in a large earthenware bowl. Add meat and let stand in refrigerator 1 to 2 days, turning meat several times. Place meat and marinade in a large kettle. Bring slowly to boil. Cover and cook over low heat 1½ to 2 hours, or until meat is tender. Remove meat and strain the liquid, forcing vegetables through the strainer. If desired, thicken liquid with flour mixed with a little water. #

Courtesy of United States Brewers Foundation, Inc.

WHAT IS A GEESE?

The following essay, according to the *Ducks Unlimited Quarterly*, was turned in to a teacher:

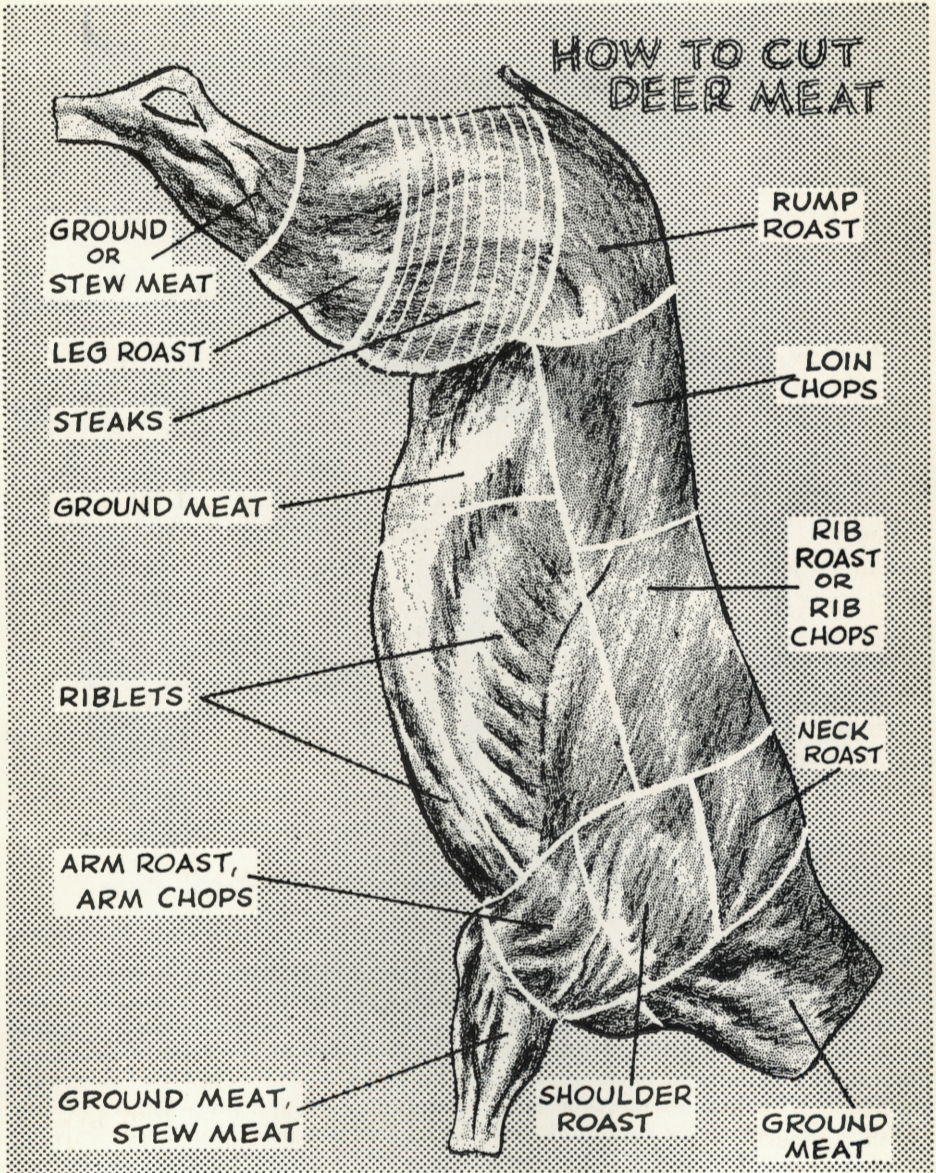
"Geese is a low, heavy-set bird which is mostly meat and feathers. His head sits on one side and he sits on the other. Geese can't sing much on account of the dampness of the moisture.

"He ain't got no between the toes and he's got a little balloon in his stomach to keep from sinking.

"Some geese when they get big has curls on their tails and is called ganders. Ganders don't haff to sit and hatch but just sit and loaf and go swimming. If I was a goose I'd rather be a gander." #

Fur, Fin ^{and} Campfire

By JACK SORDS



REMEMBER to tag your deer and report the kill

AGE & "POINTS"



1 YEAR
"SPIKES"



2 YEARS
8 POINTS
POINTS ESTABLISHED



3 YEARS
INCREASED
SIZE



4 YEARS
NO CHANGE
EXCEPT SIZE OLD AGE ABNORMALITIES



5 YEARS
8 POINTS
LARGER
NORMAL
DEVELOPMENT



6 YEARS
8 POINTS
MAXIMUM SIZE
SYMMETRICAL

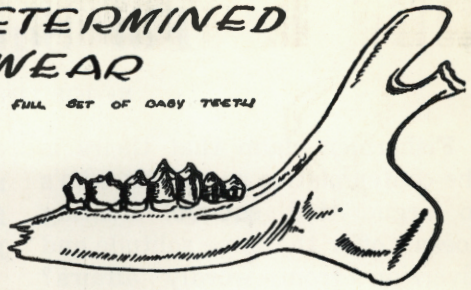


—From Oklahoma Game and Fish News

The above drawings do not necessarily depict typical antler development but represent only one possible example of how antlers might grow on one buck under continuing ideal conditions. In wild deer the number of points and size of antlers depends, to a great extent, upon the availability of proper food and the health of the deer. Occasionally a one-year-old buck in good condition may have ten points one year when food is plentiful and much smaller antlers with fewer points the next year if it is a lean year. An accident or illness also may reduce the size of antlers or number of points. Many bucks are found with an odd number of points on one side and an even number on the other. Bucks reach their prime at the age of seven or eight years. During this time the antlers generally will attain the largest size. After ten years of age bucks are on the downgrade. During this decline antlers often assume grotesque shapes and have many small points. #

AGE OF DEER DETERMINED BY DENTAL WEAR

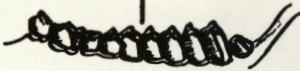
FULL SET OF BABY TEETH



FAWN

BABY TEETH SHOW HEAVY WEAR | NEW PERMANENT MOLARS

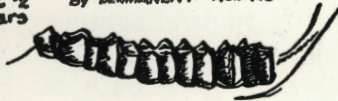
1 1/2 YEARS



PERMANENT MOLARS DEVELOPED, STANDING HIGH & SHARP.

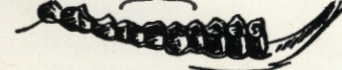
BABY TEETH REPLACED BY PERMANENT MOLARS

2 1/2 YEARS



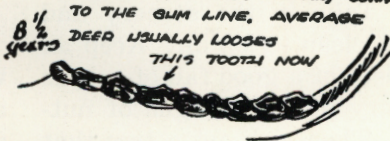
TEETH SHOW OBVIOUS WEAR, GRINDING ACTION OF CHEWING SHOWS HEAVIEST WEAR HERE

4 1/2 YEARS



DEER APPROACHES OLD AGE, MOLARS ARE WORN NEARLY DOWN TO THE GUM LINE, AVERAGE DEER USUALLY LOOSES THIS TOOTH NOW

8 1/2 YEARS



3 1/2 YEARS



5 1/2 TO 7 1/2 YEARS

WEAR IS EVENLY DISTRIBUTED



—From Texas Game & Fish by Woolldridge.

In general sportsmen can probably best determine the age of the deer they shoot by comparison of wear of the teeth, using the above sketches for guides. But, even the dental-wear method requires considerable experience and use of common-sense before a person can consider his results reliable. Professional biologists and trained wildlife technicians are able to determine the age of most deer directly from the teeth up to about the fifth year. After this period the precise age of individual deer can not usually be determined directly by the teeth. The ages of exceptionally old deer are particularly difficult to ascertain, especially since few deer attain "ripe old age" in the wild to serve as specimens. Incidentally, there is no physiological reason why healthy deer should not live to fifteen years of age or somewhat older. However, because of the rigors and dangers of life in the wild few bucks even reach half of this age. #

Comtemplative Hunting— For Squirrels

By JOE LINDUSKA

Fishermen claim that theirs is the contemplative sport. But who's to argue that squirrel hunting doesn't offer the same solitude and diversion from wordly affairs? And without the mosquitoes.

If you're weary of life in a squirrel cage, try squirrel hunting. Properly done, it will soothe jangled nerves and restore faith in humanity. And with a little attention to the job at hand, you should come back with a pair or more of the most delectable little critters in the world.

Unlike many outdoor sports, you can work *too* hard at squirrel hunting. A casual, easy-going approach is best. Stroll along leisurely-like. Take in the scenery and sniff the clean, crisp air. Keep an eye peeled for a good fall of acorns or hickory nuts and signs of nut-cutting. Then pick out a tree that fits your back, loosen your clothes and let the sun soak into your bones. No need to keep craning your neck. A squirrel will announce his presence. You'll know it even, or especially, if you're in a deep sleep.

After a long watch or a short snooze, move to fresh hunting grounds. But don't rush by an oak tree. Look hard up into the branches for squirrels.

Move slowly and look and listen

ahead for a darting shadow and rustling in the leaves. But pause for a deer track and follow along. It takes a ways to decide on



whether it was made by a buck or a doe and about what size. And anyway it will cross more squirrel sign.

This time turn the other side to the sun. It's best to be irradiated clear through. Sometimes watching the ants at your feet helps keep you awake, especially if you bear down and really try to figure out where they're coming from, where they're going and why. But don't put too many twigs across their trails. The squirrels will spot you and they won't come out.

On second thought, maybe you'd

better just watch the nuthatches. Maybe you can figure out how they manage to run down and around these tree trunks, upside-down. Among all the birds, they alone, you understand, run *down* a tree, *head first*.

And while you're in a problem-solving mood, give a little time to the Brown Creepers—that is, if you manage to see one. Their color blends so neatly with tree bark that you can scarcely make them out. Knowing naturalists refer to it as protective coloration or camouflage. It's supposed to help them get by, and to last better in the rough and tumble of outdoor-living where something is always looking for something smaller than it is to eat.

But seeing them is not the problem. Problem is, if a where-did-he-go color is so good for Brown Creepers, then how come woodpeckers and wood warblers get by so well in their here-I-am colors?

You don't have to have the answer to this and it's only sensi-

ble to give up after a fair try. It isn't as though it's the only problem that'll rear up on a squirrel hunt.

Take this business of autumn leaves. Colors are distributed with the random of flipped coins. But it's random with reason.

Think back about the mosaic of colors and you'll see that the yellows and golds hung mostly on the black oaks. The reds, if they were dusky and appeared to whisper, belonged to the white oak. But if they sparkled and shouted, most likely those reds were scarlet oak or maple, or maybe tupelo or black gum. The bright lemon yellow were hickory and the orange, sassafrass.

But why? Well, it's not very complicated, really. Something to do with chemicals and oxidation. It has been figured out and you'll probably want to look it up. I keep saying I will. But at home, by the time I've cleaned two—three squirrels, something always comes up. And anyway, I think, maybe, it's possible to know too much. #

A SPORTSMAN, BY ANY OTHER NAME . . . A peek in the dictionary, and we turn up hunter, huntsman (huntress), shooter, and from the Bible, Nimrod. A quick glance at the world around us, and we find:

| | |
|--------------------------------------|-----------|
| Sportif | French |
| Jaeger | German |
| Oilathlos (Filathlos) | Greek |
| Paani Kane (pa-ah-nee kah-nay) | Hawaiian |
| Shikari | Indian |
| Cacciatore | Italian |
| Venator | Latin |
| Jeger | Norwegian |
| Mysliwy | Polish |
| Okhotnik | Russian |
| Deportista, or Cazador | Spanish |

For Ideal Christmas Gifts – *New Jersey Outdoors*

A card with your compliments and best wishes will be sent

To: New Jersey Outdoors, P. O. Box 1809, Trenton, N. J. 08625

Please enter my subscription (at \$3.00 per year) for 1 year 2 years
 3 years for \$8.00 new renewal

Name

Street

Post Office State Zip Code

Please send a subscription (at \$3.00 per year) for 1 year 2 years
 3 years for \$8.00 new renewal

Name

Street

Post Office State Zip Code

From

Please send a subscription (at \$3.00 per year) for 1 year 2 years
 3 years for \$8.00 new renewal

Name

Street

Post Office State Zip Code

From

Please send a subscription (at \$3.00 per year) for 1 year 2 years
 3 years for \$8.00 new renewal

Name

Street

Post Office State Zip Code

From

Venison for your club **New Jersey *Outdoors***

will present a deer
for every 100 subscriptions to the magazine
submitted by clubs this year during the
Annual Club Subscription Contest

1. The Contest is open to all sportsmen's clubs in New Jersey.
2. Subscriptions are not restricted to a club's membership.
3. Subscriptions may be either new or renewals.
(If a renewal, please indicate expiration date of old subscription.)
4. Each subscription counts as one point.
5. Subscriptions for more than one year count one point per year.
6. Three-year subscriptions of \$8.00 count as three points.
7. Use official subscription forms or list alphabetically on plain paper.
(Official subscription forms may be obtained from New Jersey Outdoors on request.)
8. Subscriptions should be typewritten or clearly printed.
(A copy of each subscription should be kept by the club.)
9. Subscriptions will be accepted in lots of 25 or more.
10. Each subscription should be marked
"Your club name — Venison Contest"
11. Please show correct Post Office address and zip code number.
12. Entries must be postmarked not later than December 31.

(Kindly inform each subscriber that he may expect to receive his first copy of New Jersey Outdoors approximately six weeks after you send in his subscription with remittance.)

Please send subscriptions with check payable to New Jersey Outdoors to:
New Jersey Outdoors, P. O. Box 1809, Trenton, New Jersey 08625.



New Jersey Outdoors
P. O. Box 1809
Trenton, N. J. 08625

*Second class postage
paid at Trenton, N. J.
and additional office.*