COVER STORY
13 Years of Drought Ends with Whopper
Page 14

INSIDE
Deer Forecast
Harvest Information
Finding Sheds
License Information
Waterowl Safety
Big Buck Winners

FALL 2019
CRITTENDEN COUNTY
KENTUCKY

FREE PUBLICATION
www.marionkentucky.org
2019 Kentucky Hunting Dates

Bullfrog                                         May 17 - Oct. 31
Squirrel                                          Aug. 17 - Nov. 8
Dove                                               Sept. 1 - Oct. 26
Bow Deer                                          Sept. 7 - Jan. 20
Bow Turkey                                        Sept. 7 - Jan. 20
Canada Goose                                       Sept. 16-30
Crossbow Deer                                     Sept. 21 - Jan. 20
Teal Only                                          Sept. 26-29
Raccoon                                            Oct. 1 - Feb. 29
Crossbow Turkey                                   Oct. 1-20
Muzzleloader Deer                                 Oct. 19 - Oct. 20
Shotgun Turkey                                    Oct. 26 - Nov. 1
Gun Deer                                           Nov. 9 - Nov. 24
Crossbow Turkey                                   Nov. 9 - Dec. 31
Raccoon (trapping)                                Nov. 11 - Feb. 29
Squirrel                                           Nov. 11 - Feb. 29
Quail                                              Nov. 11 - Feb. 29
Rabbit                                             Nov. 11 - Feb. 10
Red/Gray Fox                                      Nov. 11 - Feb. 29
Beaver                                             Nov. 11 - Feb. 29
Dove                                               Nov. 28 - Dec. 8
Canada Goose                                       Nov. 28 - Feb. 15
Duck                                               Nov. 28 - Dec. 1
Shotgun Turkey                                     Dec. 7-13
Duck                                               Dec. 7 - Jan. 31
Dove                                               Dec. 21 - Jan. 12
Muzzleloader Deer                                  Dec. 14 - Dec. 22
Youth Waterfowl                                    Feb. 1-2
Coyote                                             Year Round
Groundhog                                          Year Round

Deer Corn 24/7
Cash or Credit Card
Available in
30, 60, 190 and 320 Pound Increments
Bring a container
Three available KY locations:
Princeton, Marion, Salem
1310 US 62 W, Princeton, KY 42445
1006 South Main St, Marion, KY 42064
372 West Main St, Salem, KY 42078

Candy’s Kitchen
It’s a family tradition
(270) 965-0200
Breakfast - Lunch - Dinner
Daily Specials
Homecooked Meals
Homemade Pies
BBQ - Meatloaf - Steak
Hours of Operation: 
Tues.-Sat. 6 a.m.-8 p.m.
Sun. 11 a.m.-3 p.m.
1890 US 60 East, Marion, Ky.
www.facebook.com/candyskitchenmarion

IRIS INN
Bed & Breakfast
124 East Depot Street
Marion, Kentucky
(270) 704-6015
RESERVATIONS REQUESTED
6 Rooms
4 Rooms with Private Baths

CRITTENDEN OUTDOORS
2 TWO THOUSAND NINETEEN
124 East Depot Street
Marion, Kentucky
(270) 704-6015
RESERVATIONS REQUESTED
### 2018 Deer Harvest Results

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<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>Bucks</th>
<th>Does</th>
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### KDFWR Statistics

### 2016 Deer Harvest Results

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### 2017 Deer Harvest Results

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### KDFWR Statistics

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### KDFWR Statistics

The Crittenden Outdoors Hunting Guide is produced annually by The Crittenden Press newspaper and distributed free of charge in this community and beyond.

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**FREE**
**BRING THE WHOLE FAMILY FOR LOTS OF FUN!**

**ALL YOU CAN EAT FOOD PROVIDED**
**EVERYONE HAS A CHANCE TO WIN SEVERAL DOOR PRIZES INCLUDING GUNS**

**WITH SPECIAL GUEST DR. JOE BUFFORD**
Dr. Joe Bufford serves as a pro staff leader with Buckventures Outdoors TV as featured on the Sportsman Channel. His first book, Domination, a 365-day devotional for outdoorsmen, is set to release in 2019. He is a co-founder of Pastors In The Outdoors, a ministry dedicated to reviving men of God through hunting and fishing retreats. He has been an avid outdoorsman for nearly forty years.

Test your luck or skill on scoring

**MONSTER WHITETAIL BUCKS**
(Boone & Crockett scoring system)

**TO BE HELD AT**
**THE MARION BAPTIST FAMILY LIFE CENTER**
Corner of East Depot & South College Streets, Marion, KY

**Children Welcome**
**For More Info Call: (270) 965-5232**

---

**Riverview Park**

- **Located on SR 387**
- **10 miles North of Marion on the Ohio River**
- **Formerly Dam 50**
- **Managed by Crittenden County Fiscal Court**

**12th Annual Deer Hunting Extravaganza**

**Buck Expo**

**Friday, Nov. 8, 2019**
**7-9 P.M.**

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**Cut out the above harvest log to keep record of your harvests.**

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**Harvest Log**

Please refer to the KY Hunting Guide for harvesting requirements.

Date, County, & Sex must be filled in before carcass is moved.

TELEPHONE 1-800-225-6834

DEER TURKEY ROEBUCK OTTER

JUNK BEAR SANDHILL CRANE

CONFIRMATION #

DEER TURKEY ROEBUCK OTTER

JUNK BEAR SANDHILL CRANE

CONFIRMATION #

DEER TURKEY ROEBUCK OTTER

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CONFIRMATION #

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CONFIRMATION #

DEER TURKEY ROEBUCK OTTER

JUNK BEAR SANDHILL CRANE

CONFIRMATION #

Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources
Hold on to your orange caps, this deer season could be like a fast-moving freight train, according to a local biologist and outdoors observer.

A recipe for an outstanding rifle season is brewing and it's based on a number of things lining up and that doesn't include the stars and moon.

Wildlife biologist Philip Sharp believes the upcoming deer season may be one of the best in memory. “It could be a record harvest as far as Crittenden County goes,” he said.

Sharp is a private lands biologist with the Kentucky Department and Fish and Wildlife Resources. His eyes are on a number of things at once, including natural resources, weather, etc. His insight is based upon personal experiences as well as his training as a wildlife biologist.

Deer will be on the move more this fall largely because the demand for high-protein food will be greater than it might be in other years. Sharp says the white oak production in the immediate area hasn’t been good. His observations are mostly in Crittenden and Livingston counties. Acorns of the white oak variety are scarce and he says squirrels are already working them over pretty good. Acorns from red oak trees generally fall a bit later so they’re not as much a part of the whitetail’s rut-time diet.

“A buck can’t lay in the woods all day, walk a few steps, fill up on white oak acorns then lay back down,” Sharp said. “Deer are going to have to be on the move to find food.”

Food plots and edges of crop fields will be hot spots, he says. “Most people hunt field edges anyway,” Sharp said, so that’s why the success rate will likely go up this season. If it does, the county’s record harvest of 3,451 deer in 2017 may bite the dust. Last year, Crittenden County hunters bagged 3,302 whitetails, which was the third largest take in county history.

Crittenden County, traditionally a top two or three deer harvest county in the state, attracts plenty of hunters, too, and that continues to drive harvest figures.

The local herd continues to mature, Sharp suggests, as hunters become more particular about what they harvest. Many gunners used to take yearly bucks, but now the 2.5-year-old class takes the brunt of the barrel.

“And that is probably slowly switching to 3.5-year-olds,” Sharp said.

He encourages hunters to harvest more mature bucks so that the trophy class continues to climb in the immediate area.

There have been a handful of confirmed EHD (Epizootic Hemorrhagic Disease) cases in the area, Sharp said, but EHD should not be confused with the more threatening CWD (Chronic Wasting Disease). EHD occurs quite regularly in deer herds, particularly during drought conditions. Deer infected with EHD are safe to eat. No research has shown that the virus can be spread to humans or pets.
Boone&Crockett Class

Bucks taken with a gun can qualify for Boone and Crockett Club’s recordbook and for bowhunters the book is kept by Pope and Young. For “Boon-ers” the minimum scoring points for whitetail deer is 160 inches. For Pope and Young the minimum for a whitetail is 125 inches. There are also minimums for non-typical antlers. There is a well-defined system for measuring the antlers in both categories, which uses length and mass as the key factors.

2019 KENTUCKY HUNTING LICENSE FEES

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TOO HARVEST COUNTIES 2018-19 DEER SEASON

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MOST COMMON GAME VIOLATIONS

KDFWR officials say these are the most common violations made during hunting season.

1. Not filling out back of hunting license.
2. Failure to call KDFWR Telecheck system.
3. Trespassing.
4. Failure to wear appropriate hunter orange.

KDFWR Deer Tele-Check System
1-800-CHK-DEER
1-800-245-4263
REPORT A POACHER
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Hwy. 91 North of Marion, KY
(7.5 Miles from Downtown Marion on the Left)
HOURS: Mon. - Sat. 8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m., Closed SUNDAY
CRITTENDEN OUTDOORS

Local WMAs offer public hunting opportunities

Big Rivers WMA
Located in Crittenden and Union counties, the WMA is 7,574 acres.
Directions: From Sturgis, Ky., at the intersection of U.S. HWY 60 and KY 109, travel north on KY 109 for 1.65 miles, turn left (west) onto KY 1508 and proceed 1.45 miles to main Union County entrance on left. Also from Sturgis, at the intersection of US 60 and KY 365, travel west on KY 365 and proceed 2.5 miles to main Crittenden County entrance and area office on right. Additional Crittenden County access is available on Bells Mine Road off KY 365. From Marion, travel 7.5 miles east on US 60, turn left on KY 365 and travel for 6.8 miles.
Description: Steep to very steep upland hardwood forests, flat to rolling bottomland hardwood forest, and agricultural lands bordered by the Ohio River to the west and the Tradewater River to the south.

Livingston County WMA and State Natural Areas
Consists of three tracts, the Bissell Bluff SNA (562 acres), Newman’s Bluff SNA (461 acres), and Reynolds (873 acres).
Regulations: Open under statewide regulations for squirrel, rabbit, quail, fall turkey and furbearer seasons.
Description: Deer: Open under statewide regulations for the archery, crossbow and youth firearm seasons; however, during quota hunts, all deer hunting seasons on this WMA are closed, except to drawn hunters. Archery/crossbow-only quota hunt from the Monday following the October youth-only weekend through Nov. 30, except when closed during the two-day quota hunt that starts the first Saturday in November.

Ohio River Islands WMA
On the Ohio River upstream from Smithland Lock and Dam, Stewart (Birdsville) Island and surrounding river area is a waterfowl refuge closed Oct. 15-March 15. Accessed by numerous ramps along Ohio River, including Birdsville Ramp off KY 137. Public hunting allowed prior to closure.
Twin Sisters, Pryor, Rondeau islands and a large marsh area located between Pryor and Twin Sisters islands provide waterfowl hunting from temporary blinds. Access to the islands on Kentucky side north islands at Givens Creek Ramp off of Golconda Ferry Road, and south at Birdsville Ramp off of Birdsville Road at KY 137. Roads are accessible off of KY 137, north of Smithland, and on the Illinois side at Davidson Memorial Boat Ramp and Golconda Marina Ramp.
Stewart Island/Birdsville Island Unit: Deer: Open under statewide archery and crossbow seasons through Oct. 14 only. Open during October muzzleloader season; closed during December muzzleloader season. Open during the youth gun season; closed for free youth weekend. Quail & Rabbit: Closed. Squirrel: Open from the third Saturday in May through the third Friday in June; and from the third Saturday in August through Oct. 14. Turkey (Fall): Archery and crossbow seasons open under statewide regulations through Oct. 14 only. Closed for fall gun season. Turkey (Spring): Open under statewide regulations. The Stewart Island Unit is closed to public access Oct. 15 – March 15, except during early muzzleloader deer season. Waterfowl: The portion of the Ohio River from Smithland Lock and Dam upstream to the powerline crossing at river mile 911.5 is closed to hunting. Stewart (Birdsville) Island is closed to public access Oct. 15 - March 15, except for October muzzleloader season. Shooting hours are from one-half hour before sunrise to 2 p.m. Hunters may not enter the area until 4 a.m.

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General hardware and tools • Fencing supplies • Dog food
Hunters who intend to hunt migratory birds are required to have a Migratory Bird-Waterfowl Permit, or any license that includes it. They must also go online or make a phone call and fill out the Harvest Information Program (HIP) questions before they are legal migratory bird hunters. Only those who plan to hunt migratory birds need to complete the HIP survey. The process takes less than five minutes. Go to the “My Profile” page to complete the survey. This page will ask for some basic information to confirm your identity. After completing the HIP questions, you will receive a confirmation number that must be written on your hunting license or Kentucky Migratory Game Bird-Waterfowl Hunting Permit. Those without internet access may call the department at 1-800-858-1549 from 8 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. weekdays for assistance.
Jacob Perryman has been deer hunting since he was old enough to safely handle a gun. He’s taken some very nice bucks over the years while hunting in the lucrative Ohio River bottoms near Tolu.

But what he calls a “management buck” taught him a valuable lesson last fall.

Perryman, 43, won the 2018 Crittenden County Big Buck Contest sponsored by Marion Tourism, pocketing $1,000 in cash.

Ironically, the deer that made him a bit richer was one he never observed with such fondness.

The husky whitetail with a heavy but unremarkable seven-point rack came onto the scene four years earlier. Perryman and other family members have a farm between Tolu and Sheridan that they watch closely with trail cameras. A big six-pointer kept showing up in pre-season pictures. It was a buck they named Big Six. And he had a bounty on his head.

“I call him a management buck. We wanted to take him out of the herd because we didn’t want him to pass along those six-point genetics,” Perryman says. “But he kept outsmarting us.”

Season after season, the mature buck would show up in nightly trail cam pictures, but seldom during daylight hours. Perryman’s brother had a near miss in culling the buck during rifle season 2017, but Big Six escaped.

“When he showed up this (last season), he’d added another point and was a huge seven pointer,” Perryman said. “The bases of his antlers are 5½ inches and he had an 18-inch inside spread. I believe he was the biggest seven pointer I’d ever seen.”

Perryman tried to get the buck during bow season. He watched the deer make a scrape one day, but it didn’t come close enough for a shot.

“If he hadn’t have followed a doe across the field on opening morning of rifle season I don’t know if we’d have gotten him this time,” Perryman adds.

What he didn’t realize was the payday this otherwise undistinguished buck would offer.

“My sister had put me and my cousin in the Big Buck Contest,” he said.

At first, he wasn’t sure it had a chance, but he checked the buck at Hodge’s Sports and Apparel where it was scored. The formula for the contest is quite unique, taking a multiple of the inside spread and number of points plus body weight for a final tally.

The buck field dressed 173 pounds but Perryman said it looked even bigger.

“We expected him to be a little heavier, honestly,” he said. And that was the least of his surprises as this Crittenden County hunter got the biggest bombshell when Big Six Plus One took the top prize in the county’s buck contest.
Statistics clearly indicate that more waterfowl hunters die each year from drowning, hypothermia and cold water shock than from accidentally discharged firearms.

In other words, the water is often more dangerous than the gun in your boat.

Kentucky Afield published an article not too long ago about waterfowl hunting safety. In it, several longtime hunters and outdoors specialists discussed the key ingredients to staying safe and dry while hunting ducks and geese.

“One of the biggest safety issues for waterfowl hunting in winter is overloading the boat,” said Zac Campbell, boating education coordinator for the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources for that article in Kentucky Afield. “With waterfowl hunting, you have so much equipment. Your equipment and decoys weigh a lot. Hunters sometimes don’t realize how much all that stuff weighs when you put it all together.”

The boat operator is responsible for knowing the weight capacity of the boat. While a 16-foot jon boat is generally accepted as the minimum size for waterfowl hunting, it’s not unusual to see smaller vessels packed with gear and hunters out on the open water.

“There are sometimes enough people and gear for two or three boats in one boat,” Campbell explained. “All the hunters may want to go in the same boat so they can be with their friends, but it can create a very dangerous situation if they overload the boat.”

Well over 20,000 people waterfowl hunt in Kentucky each year, according to Rocky Pritchert, migratory bird program coordinator at Kentucky Fish and Wildlife. Pritchert, an experienced waterfowl hunter himself, offered some simple advice to stay out of trouble.

“If you do capsize, stay with the boat if at all possible,” Pritchert said in the Kentucky Afield article written by Norm Minch. “Today’s boats have extra flotation built in and are easier to locate than a single person in the water.”

Four waterfowl hunters have died in accidents in the Kentucky over the past two decades. If you look the circumstances in those cases, it emphasizes the importance of wearing a life vest or flotation coat at all times while waterfowl hunting.

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In a recent ranking, Kentucky was 15th in the nation for collisions between automobiles and deer. The movement of deer along Kentucky highways takes a noticeable upturn starting in early-October and into November and early December. Shorter days and cooler evenings serve to kick off the fall deer mating season.

Increased field activity by farmers as they harvest crops may also contribute to putting deer on the move and make them more likely to come into the path of passing vehicles.

The average car insurance claim involving deer is $4,341, according to figures supplied by State Farm Insurance.

Odds of being involved in a deer collision in Kentucky are 1 out of 107, but that likelihood doubles during deer season, from October to December. Kentucky Transportation officials offer several driving tips to help improve safety:

- Slow down immediately when you spot a deer crossing the roadway ahead, as deer tend to travel in groups.
- Don’t swerve to avoid a deer. Swerving can result in a more serious crash with an oncoming vehicle or roadside object.
- In the event of a crash, keep both hands on the wheel and apply brakes steadily until stopped.
- Motorists are asked to report all deer-vehicle collisions to police so locations and crash numbers can be recorded and monitored.
- Always wear a safety belt.
- Keep headlights on bright unless other vehicles are approaching.
- Drive defensively, constantly scanning the roadside.
Fall turkeys gobble acorns

Like most creatures, turkeys vary their feeding location based on time of year and availability of food. Adult birds feed primarily on acorns in November and December.

After baby turkeys are hatched, they require insects, as much as 75% of the diet, for the first few weeks of their lives. However, by fall seasons, these young birds focus on food with high fat content, such as acorns, to be prepared for survival through their first winter.

While plant material is as much as 90% of the adult turkey’s diet, archery hunters may find them in fall season eating grasshoppers in the early morning sun. When acorns are available, turkeys will feast on them for the majority of their diets during fall gun seasons. They may also eat berries, greens and waste grain. When considering food sources as part of the hunting plan, knowing these parts of your hunting area where a variety of food is available within a small area will improve your chances. You can also look for places the birds have been scratching in the leaves to locate feeding areas.
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Staff Report

The greatest form of flattery in the deer hunting business might just be getting your own moniker.

The personification of a trophy whitetail is a common denominator among the hunting ranks. To give a deer a name is akin to building a monument to him. It’s a show of respect, if you will.

When 14-year-old Chloe James last fall bagged a nine-point buck with lots of defining personality, she quickly christened him “Character.”

A lifelong Crittenden Countian, James has been hunting in the eastern quadrant of the community since she was old enough to know how.

“I have been hunting on my family’s farm for close to seven years now and have helped with managing the deer population on our property,” she said.

It was cold and sunny on the day she harvested “Character.” The buck was entered into the Marion Tourism Commission’s Big Buck Contest and it delivered a first-place prize for the young gunner.

“Dad and I had been in the stand all day,” James remembers. “Does and young bucks had been milling about the radishes and oats we had planted in the summer. There was only about 15 minutes until dark when ‘Character’ ran into the field.”

James took aim and fired. The buck ran out of sight so she and her father left the area to allow nature to take its course.

“I hadn’t realized how big he was until I shot him. After eating dinner and allowing him time to expire we found him in a bunch of broomsedge,” she said.

James says the buck earned his name because of a flyer or kicker it has off the back of the G2. “It also had torn ears and a hole clean through his nose,” she said.

“I can’t wait until Barrett Sherer has my shoulder mount ready so everyone can see it,” she added.
Being a former athlete, a football coach and just generally a competitive fellow, Blake Gardner hunts for success, and he needs positive returns to keep him motivated.

That's why after several scoreless seasons, the 30-year-old bowhunter was ready to throw in the towel.

"I just about gave it up the last couple of years," he said for an interview last fall. "Reaping no rewards, it was hard to keep doing it."

To the point of being humbled by the chase, Gardner decided to retool, re-arm with a new bow and give it one last try.

After being shutout for 13 hunting seasons, Gardner scored a big victory in early October 2018, bagging a 22-pointer that roughs out at around 176 on the Pope and Young scoring system.

"I had hunted that same stand about eight times and had seen this buck a couple of weeks earlier," he explains. "He came within bow range, but there were some limbs and I couldn't get a shot at him."

Predictably, the deer returned on the same trail the next time. But on this occasion, the big whitetail made a mistake.

"He was with a little six-pointer," said the farmer and part-time middle school football coach. "He came the same way he had before and went to the field just picking around."

Gardner had gotten on his stand at 3:30 p.m., and the buck appeared about 45 minutes later. It and the smaller buck stayed in the field for about 30 minutes, then the big one left. Headed away on the same path from where he'd come.

"But this time he walked around a brush pile and gave me a shot at 40 yards," Gardner said.

The Carbon Express Maximum Red arrow tipped with a NAP Spitfire did the trick.

"I hit him a little high and forward, but it dropped him pretty much in his tracks," said the hunter.

"I've always loved deer hunting, but I'd never capitalized on a nice buck," he said.
Generations of hunters have honed basic hunting skills and techniques and provided tasty table fare by stalking the forest for bushytails.

For many, the squirrel is the first live critter on which they steadied a rifle. Its wily behavior in the treetops presents a formidable foe for a young gunner just cutting his teeth on the outdoors.

Fifteen-year-old Tucker Sharp of Marion is by no means a rookie. He’s spent countless hours afield with his father, who is a wildlife biologist for the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources.

“I like to squirrel hunt because it is good practice for perfecting your shot,” said Sharp, whose gun of choice is a .22 long rifle.

“I also enjoy just being outdoors hunting,” he adds.

Chasing bushy tails is the best way to become a better hunter and outdoorsman, even for those who feel like chiseled, hardened veterans of the field.

Kentucky’s fall squirrel season opened in August and runs until the end of February, other than a short pause for the opening day of rifle deer season.

Squirrel hunting is good this season. Biologists say squirrel numbers have been trending up for a little while.

Hunters help Kentucky Fish and Wildlife monitor the squirrel population by volunteering for the annual Squirrel Hunter Cooperator Survey.

The fall mast crop plays a considerable role in squirrel populations. Following a good mast year, squirrels typically enter spring and summer in better physical condition and female squirrels tend to produce healthier litters.

The squirrel is important to the evolution of a hunter. As children, many of us were taught to stop, look and listen before crossing a roadway or railroad tracks. The concept also applies to squirrel hunting during the early fall season when trees are still full of leaves and the dense foliage can conceal squirrels from a hunter’s sight. That’s why a lot of people prefer to use a shotgun in the early season.

While you’re afield stalking bushytails, look for stands of hickory, oak and beech trees. Freshly cut nuts falling from above or shavings piled around the base of a tree are tell-tale signs of a good place to set up.
When deer season ends every winter, there’s a cloud that settles over a hunter’s dreams for the next few weeks, but there’s no reason to let the wintertime, huntless blues get you down. Horn hunting can be almost just as fun, and at times equally rewarding.

Now, we know that deer do not have horns, right? Horns are fitted to animals permanently. Deer have what is correctly called antlers, which identify them as boney items that shed annually.

When bucks shed their “horns” it’s time for outdoorsmen to move in and collect them off the ground.

Whitetail deer shed their antlers in the winter time or early spring and almost as soon as they drop, new ones begin to grow on the animal’s head. At first they’re covered with a hairy-like “velvet” that is rubbed off just before the firearms hunting seasons begins in the fall. However, with the advent of early bowhunting, many deer are now being taken in velvet.

If you don’t get the buck you’re looking for during the hunting season, go back to the deer’s habitat in late winter and there’s a chance you’ll find a trophy.

Searching for dropped antlers is fun, exciting and also tells you a whole lot about deer activity in late seasons, which can come in handy the following year.

Following are some tips for finding shed antlers.

• Take your time and crawl around in the thickets where you might find rabbits. Deer will forage in dense thickets when food becomes scarce, and that same thicket also provides a safe haven from predators and weather. Thickets also tend to have vines and other stringy or stemmy vegetation that can grab at loose antlers and tug them from a buck’s head.

• Look around fence lines. When bucks jump over, they often jar loose one side of their rack, or maybe even both sides. A buck with a heavier set of antlers will likely lose them both in the same general area.

• Cedar thickets, CRP fields and grassy bedding areas are nice places to search for sheds.

• Customary travel routes, creek crossings, ditch crossings are great places to get started.

• Food sources should be among your first searches. Deer will concenterate near food plots, grain fields or places were late-winter acorns may remain.

• Pay particular attention to south or east slopes of hillsides as those places attract deer in colder months.

• Don’t forget to look around water sources, too, particularly if rainfall has been scarce for several weeks.

• Riding a four-wheeler near fence lines is a quick way to cover lots of ground in a hurry. Be sure to keep your eyes peeled, look for tips of antlers instead of concentrating on seeing a whole set of horns. Usually, that ivory looking tip on one tine may be all you see sticking up.

• Another tactic is to change your eye level. Shift the perspective, crouch down or even drop completely to the ground and scan along the forest floor.
Crittenden County has an active Hunters for the Hungry chapter. Venison donated to the organization helps feed people right here in this county. The meat is distributed through the Crittenden County Food Bank, the fourth Friday of each month.

Hunters for the Hungry will pay for processing of the animal. The participating Hunters for the Hungry processor in Crittenden County is Family Butcher Shop on Rooster Lane of Ky. 654 North in the Amish community near Mattoon.

Recently, Hunters for the Hungry launched a program aimed at matching landowners needing deer depredation help with hunters willing to harvest those animals and donate them to the food bank. It is called the Kentucky Whitetail Access Program. More information can be found at http://kyhuntersforthehungry.info/whitetail_access.html.

For more information on the Hunters for the Hungry program, go online to http://kyhuntersforthehungry.info/processors.html.
Small gamers stay afield longer than many others

An old-fashioned rabbit hunt needs few of the trappings that mark today’s outdoorsman. You will not find ATVs, UTVs, sophisticated stands, high-powered weapons with optics or any type of call, feeder or gimmick devices that are pervasive among big game gunners. A scattergun, briar-retardant britches and few hounds serve the small-game hunter quite well.

Jason Champion of Marion is one of a handful of sportsmen who still enjoy being afield behind his beagles. Rabbit and quail hunting has certainly dropped off in numbers in recent years, with the latter almost falling off the charts.

“You can hunt rabbits into February long after deer season is over,” said Champion on a sunny, cool late winter afternoon that produced a few bunnies for the bag.

Champion hunts pretty hard when he can. His job at a local rock quarry demands much of his time and says family matters also dictate when he can get into the field. But when there are a few hours to spare on the weekend or especially over the holidays, he likes to be with his dogs and friends.

Rabbit hunting can be a social event. Following along a set of beagles is nothing akin to the rigors of lapping in behind a pointer hunting birds. The pace of rabbit hunting tends to appeal to a broad base of hunters. Champion enjoys inviting friends along and likes teaching the younger generation about hunting small critters and enjoying the sounds of a beagle in pursuit.

His hunts take him from the swamps of the Mississippi River in the east to hills east of Crittenden County and even beyond.

“We try to go to Wisconsin for a hunt every year, too,” he said.

Having the right gear to rabbit hunt is important, and dressing for the weather can be a bit tricky. When it’s 35 degrees, Champion said it’s easy to want to dress warmly, but the aerobic activity pressing through thickets can work the heart rate up in a hurry. When you’re 400 yards from the pickup, it’s too late to shed a few layers of clothing.

Champion says he buys his chaps from the Amish. They hold up well, he said.

“I’ve seen other people with other brands wear out a set in a couple of seasons,” he said. “I’ve had these a long time,” pointing to a dark brown pair he was wearing on a mild January morning earlier this year.

Rabbit and quail seasons run from Nov. 11 through Feb. 10.
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