

CRITTENDEN OUTDOORS

HUNTING GUIDE

FALL - WINTER 2015
CRITTENDEN COUNTY
KENTUCKY

**Celebrities Fill
Local Forests:
LEGENDS OF
THE FALL ...
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CRITTENDEN OUTDOORS

Local herd has more big bucks this season, say outdoors experts

Kentucky has officially etched its name into the legendary annals of Trophy Deer Hunting. It's been an interesting ride, and the label has not come without some sacrifice and hard work through proper whitetail management.

"Several things have played a role in Kentucky climbing the ladder as one of the top-producing trophy states in the country and management is right at the top of the list," said Mark Williams, a land agent for Whitetail Properties. "The success of the state is not just in western Kentucky. We are seeing huge deer being harvested all over the state. Quality Deer Management (QDM) has changed Kentucky for the better."

The thing about QDM, Williams explains, is that it has encouraged hunters to stop harvesting juvenile males – allowing bucks to grow older, thus creating a better age structure. If you look at annual harvest data put out by the state, the average age of bucks taken is getting older statewide.

There is at least one other factor that will increase the chances of hunters bagging a trophy buck this season. Philip Sharp, a private lands biologist for the KDFWR, said Crittenden County has a good number of quality deer

roaming the hillsides this fall. He has seen the evidence on several trail cameras from across the area.

"When I say good deer, I mean those in the 150 range.

That's a good deer," he said.

Sharp said Kentucky's herd is just now recovering to full strength after suffering an EHD outbreak in 2007. The age dynamics of the herd has now allowed more mature bucks to reach trophy potential.

"You cannot harvest trophy deer if you don't let them get old, that is just a cold hard fact," Williams added.

What has really improved across the state, Williams continues, and is driven by QDM, is that landowners and those hunters leasing land have created better habitat on their properties. Habitat is one of the four corners of QDM and hunters have taken it to heart.

"I deal with selling hunting land every day. It's all I do," Williams said. "The properties that I sell that crank out big deer every year all have one thing in common: the hunters do *not* harvest juvenile bucks, period."



Williams



OUTDOOR CLOTHING

Youth- Adult









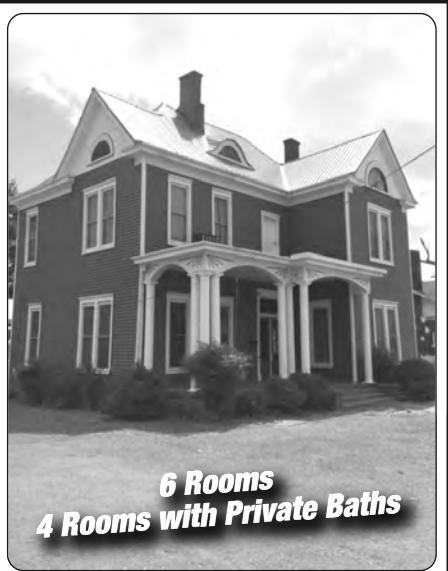

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Beckner's late-season buck scores big

Beau Beckner's patience and persistence paid off with a monster whitetail buck last season which was good enough to claim first prize in the local Big Buck Contest sponsored by Hodge's Sports and Apparel and the City of Marion Tourism Commission.

Beckner, who has also shared the coyote hunting contest title the last few years, is making quite a name for himself among local outdoorsmen.

The coal miner said he knew there was a pretty good buck in the neighborhood of some hunting property near Fredonia where he had permission, but he didn't expect what he dropped the final weekend of rifle season.

"I had trail cam pics of this particular buck back in October," he said. "He didn't look near as big in the pics so I never tried pursuing the deer."

Beckner's attention was turned toward another big deer on another piece of property the week before rifle season. He took a week's vacation to archery hunt before the gunners got in the woods, but he missed a nice 150-class 10-pointer.

From there, his season took a few steps backward.

"I hunted the rest of the week without getting a shot at another nice buck. Gun season came in and I didn't get to hunt a lot except weekends due to work."

In addition to working on filling his own buck tag, Beckner said he wanted to help his girlfriend Erin Boone take her first deer.

"So I passed up several decent bucks but no really big ones," he explained. "It came down to the last weekend and I knew I had to get her a deer."

By then, Beckner had almost given up on harvesting a trophy for himself.

"I had hunted since September and passed up over 30 bucks and missed the big 10-point with a bow," he said.

It was the final weekend of rifle season and Beckner focused foremost on getting his gal a good buck.

"We hunted Saturday and nothing," he said. "Sunday morning came. I didn't want to get out of bed. But I had to get her a shot at a deer, so we got up and went to the

property where I had those trail cam pics."

Beckner hadn't been on that particular hunting tract all season. He'd worked all his other spots pretty good, yet to no avail.

"We got in the stand at daylight. Not 20 minutes after daylight we began seeing deer. An hour after daylight, a buck came walking right by. I told my girlfriend to get ready. She shot and her buck went down," Beckner explained.

"She was really excited. I told her let's keep sitting here a while so maybe I can get one."

Shortly thereafter, another buck came by chasing a doe. It wasn't big enough to harvest, so Beckner and his girlfriend enjoyed watching it for a while.

"A few minutes later I heard something to my left thinking it was a squirrel. I turned slowly to see this big buck making a rub on a tree 25 yards away. I about had a heart attack," he said.

It was a monster, and it was so close Beckner knew it might see him before he could get off a shot.

"I told my girlfriend not to move. I eased my gun around and aimed.



Beau Beckner and Erin Boone show off the bucks they took last season while hunting near Fredonia.

The buck turned and looked right at me. But it was too late," he said.

His aim was true. The big buck ran about 75 yards and went down.

"I didn't realize he was as nice as he was til I walked up to it," he said. "It was a great hunt since we both got a buck."

With the deer on the ground, Beckner saw that it had a 20-inch spread. It was field dressed and later weighed in at 195 pounds.

At that point, he knew the chance he took on buying a ticket for the Big Buck Contest might just pay off.

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CRITTENDEN OUTDOORS

DEER HUNTING

Kentucky harvest continues to grow season after season

KDFWR REPORT

After two seasons of record harvests, Kentucky's deer hunters kept the pace up last fall and winter.

The 2014-15 season closed on Jan. 19 with 138,892 deer checked; the second highest total on record and third consecutive season with a harvest exceeding 130,000 deer.

"I'm happy," said Gabe Jenkins, deer and elk program coordinator with the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources.

"There are a lot of deer on the landscape, and we're seeing an uptick in license sales. We're providing hunting opportunity and our hunters are able to be successful. As an agency, that's what we want to do."

A record 144,409 deer were taken during the 2013-14 season when a spotty acorn crop put deer on the move.

Acorns were plentiful across much of the state last fall. Recognizing this, many hunters likely shifted their focus from field edges to the timber and travel corridors instead.

A strong opening month and an unprecedented start to the modern gun deer season emerged as key drivers.

"The three seasons where we have had our three greatest harvests have featured big Novembers," said David Yancy, deer biologist with Kentucky Fish and Wildlife. "And there's no question September has become more important or more interesting to hunters. I think hunters have gotten to where they like it and can't wait to get out there."

Hunters checked 5,928 deer in September 2014, the third highest total on record for that month. Favorable weather across the state spurred a record harvest on opening weekend of modern gun deer season.

Compared to the 2013 season, the modern gun harvest finished at 102,889, down less than 2 per-

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.

cent from the season before.

Archers bagged 18,368 deer and muzzleloader hunters 14,673. Crossbow hunters accounted for 2,962 of the harvest total.

Owen County again led the state. Hunters there checked 3,470 whitetails. Pendleton County was next with 3,305 followed by **Crittenden County at 3,224**, Christian County at 3,062 and Graves County at 2,964.

The majority of deer taken were male. Female deer accounted for 45.7 percent of the overall harvest.

Biologists estimated the statewide herd at 1 million deer entering this past season. Herd estimates are derived through computer modeling that takes into account harvest and age structure data.

Looking ahead, the prospects are promising for a strong 2015 season.

"We really had a more pronounced December and January rut," Jenkins said. "Those late ruts are usually an indicator of herd health. I heard a lot of people talking about fawns cycling in January. That's strictly related to health; the fact that they're good, fat and capable of doing that. More than likely, they will have a fawn, and that equates to more fawns on the landscape this spring which equates to more hunting opportunity (this) season."

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The 'Good Old Days' of deer hunting are right now in the commonwealth

Kentucky has received national acclaim for the quality of its deer herd, and the numbers help draw the attention.

The state has produced hundreds of trophy-class bucks over the past five seasons and hunters last season combined to take 138,899 deer overall. It was the second highest harvest total on record behind only the 2013-14 season.

"I think this might be the new norm for a little bit," said Gabe Jenkins, deer and elk program coordinator for the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources. "It's also indicative of how many deer we have on the landscape."

The 2015-16 deer season is already under way with archery season, and the outlook points to another good year for hunters. Bi-

ologists say the herd is doing well and estimate it to number about one million at the outset.

"We've had two pretty harsh winters in a row and people may draw the conclusion that maybe we're putting a hurt on the population," Jenkins said. "With the mast crop that we had last year, which gave the animals that lived through the season a good boost, and with a mild and wet summer, the deer should be primed to go into the hunting season. I expect things to be good."

Kentucky takes a four-zone approach to deer management with Zones 2 and 3 considered the sweet spot.

"That's right where the population is primed," Jenkins said. "It's good and healthy, we're not having a lot of vehicle-deer collisions, we're not seeing a lot of disease and we're not having a lot of conflicts with agriculture."

"Zone 1 means we've got too many deer. Zone 4 means we need to grow the deer population."

Crittenden is a Zone 1 county.

Deer populations in some counties hit hardest by the most recent Epizootic Hemorrhagic Disease (EHD) outbreaks are back to pre-2007 levels or better. A change in zone assignments for some counties in the Green River, Bluegrass and Southeast wildlife regions is indicative of that rebound.

Bullitt, Green, Hopkins, LaRue and Nelson counties are now Zone 1. Hunters may harvest an unlimited number of antlerless deer in Zone 1 counties but must have the appropriate number of additional deer permits.

"You can expect a slight uptick in the harvest total in those counties," said Kyle Sams, deer biologist with Kentucky Fish and Wildlife. "Most hunters like to see that change from a Zone 2 to a Zone 1 because it gives them the option to harvest more deer. And for the people that are experiencing damage, it gives them an outlet to take more deer."

Other zone shifts to note: Grayson and Ohio counties have moved to Zone 2 from Zone 3. Zone 2 offers a 16-day modern gun season during which hunters may

take deer of either sex. Allen County was Zone 2 last season but will be managed as a Zone 3 county this season.

The Kentucky Hunting and Trapping Guide – available online at fw.ky.gov and wherever licenses are sold – includes information about those and other regulatory changes from last season. One other note is that legal resident hunters, age 65 and older, may now hunt deer with a crossbow throughout the archery season.

Deer are about to leave their summer patterns. The pattern shifts once acorns start hitting the ground.

Early returns from mast surveys point toward poor white oak acorn production across the state and red oaks producing acorns in some spots but not others. Beech and hickory nut production looks to be better than last year. If the early returns hold true, hunters would do

2014-15 Deer Harvest Results

County	Bucks	Does	Bow	Rifle	M'loader	C'bow	Total
Crittenden	1,606	1,618	454	2,456	268	46	3,224
Webster	1,238	1,204	360	1,825	215	42	2,442
Livingston	943	890	221	1,379	221	12	1,833
Caldwell	973	737	209	1,331	145	25	1,710
Union	570	489	264	721	60	14	1,059
Lyon	445	365	200	536	50	24	810

KDFWR Statistics

well to focus on those trees that are producing acorns. Landowners may consider planting a late fall or winter food plot in early fall.

"If there's not going to be that bumper crop of oaks, that's going to make the deer search for food a little more, potentially making themselves more available to hunters," Sams said. "If you can find a white oak that is producing that would be a good spot to set a tree stand or get out and do some hunting around that area because they will key in on that first thing."

Archery season continues through Jan. 18, 2016. In between, early crossbow and muzzleloader seasons arrive in October with the crossbow season picking up again in November at the outset of modern gun season. Modern gun sea-

son accounted for 74 percent of the overall harvest total last season and this year opens statewide on Nov. 14. December sees the late muzzleloader and crossbow seasons end.

Something else to consider is a quota deer hunt. There are 29 to choose from this year. New to the quota hunt lineup are a two-day firearms quota hunt in early November at Kentucky River WMA in Henry and Owen counties and an early December quota hunt for antlerless deer only at Veterans Memorial WMA in Scott County. Hunters may apply for quota hunts via the department's website or by calling 1-877-598-2401 through the end of the September.

Sams reminds everyone to be safe in the woods this season.

Crittenden County DEER HARVESTS

1993	2,357
1994	1,826
1995	1,857
1996	2,065
1997	1,874
1998	2,728
1999	2,201
2000	2,597
2001	2,272
2002	2,695
2003	2,586
2004	3,032
2005	2,593
2006	3,085
2007	2,927
2008	2,707
2009	2,549
2010	2,952
2011	2,829
2012	3,010
2013	3,033
2014	3,224

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CRITTENDEN OUTDOORS

Guns are heirlooms: Keep them firing right, well preserved

KENTUCKY AFIELD

Proper firearms maintenance is important throughout the year, not just on days leading up to the next season.

"If you want your rifle to last longer, the best way to do that is to keep it from getting rusty," said Bill Balda, an expert marksman and the Hunter Education Supervisor for the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources. "The best way to keep it from getting rusty is to clean and lubricate it. As a result, you get to know your rifle better and you know it's in safe working condition."

A well-maintained rifle can last

generations and will perform better over time. Neglecting routine maintenance can lead to a buildup of gunpowder residue and metal fouling.

Muzzleloading rifles require even more rigorous care.

"The simplest way to unload a muzzleloader is to fire it into a safe backstop. But the residue from burnt black powder and even its substitutes is extremely corrosive," said Mark Marraccini, Kentucky Fish and Wildlife spokesman and a muzzleloader craftsman. "If you leave that inside the barrel for very long it would be just like dipping any piece of steel into corrosive acid or salt. It's going to start etching its way into the steel immediately."

Marraccini warns against creat-

ing pits in the barrel. "They will affect accuracy later and could make your muzzleloader unsafe," he said.

Before undertaking any cleaning routine, first make sure the rifle is not loaded.

For centerfire rifles, Balda suggests cleaning the barrel with patches wet with gun cleaner first, then, a wet brush for five to 10 passes. After the initial cleaning, continue to use dry patches until they come out clean. A light coat of oil then can be applied in the bore.

"If you want to remove copper buildup after shooting 500 to 1,000 rounds, there are chemical cleaners that can be used. I use a bore paste, which is like a jeweler's paste. It has grit in it that is

harder than copper but not hard enough to score the steel of the barrel," Balda said. "Most liquid cleaners have ammonia in them. When you run that patch through and take it out and it has blue on it that means you have copper in the barrel. I would first brush it out and then go ahead and patch it dry. Then, put bore paste on another patch and scrub it in there. You can go back and forth, particularly at the throat, seven or eight times."

Balda recommends placing a piece of wood on the end of the barrel to prevent the cleaning rod from coming out.

"When you pull that out, that paste is going to look black no matter what," he said. "Then check it with a wet patch. If the

wet patch is blue, there still is copper present. Then, you have to keep doing it. Even if you only get half the copper out of it, it will still shoot better."

While you're at it, check the bedding screws. Wood stocks tend to shrink and swell with changing environmental conditions and that can loosen those screws. For pesky screws that refuse to stay tight, Balda suggests securing them with blue Loctite.

If your rifle is a bolt action, Balda suggests removing the bolt and cleaning the bolt face and the receiver inside the action with a toothbrush-style cleaning brush. Then, wipe with a light coat of oil. Wipe down the outside of the rifle and clean the lenses on the scope.

KENTUCKY'S

"MOST COMMON"

HUNTING SEASONS

Groundhog	Year Round
Coyote Daytime	Year Round
Bullfrog	May 15 - Oct. 31
Squirrel	Aug. 15 - Nov. 13
Dove	Sept. 1 - Oct. 26
Rail / Gallinule	Sept. 1 - Nov. 9
Canada Goose	Sept. 1-15
Archery Deer	Sept. 5 - Jan. 18
Archery Turkey	Sept. 5 - Jan. 18
Wilson Snipe	Sept. 16 - Oct. 25
Wood Duck, Teal	Sept. 19-23
Teal Only	Sept. 24-27
Crossbow Deer	Oct. 1 - Oct. 18
Crossbow Turkey	Oct. 1 - Oct. 18
Youth Deer	Oct. 10 - 11
Muzzleloader	Oct. 17 - 18
Shotgun Turkey	Oct. 24 - Oct. 30
Gun Deer	Nov. 14 - Nov. 29
Crossbow Deer	Nov. 14 - Dec. 31
Crossbow Turkey	Nov. 14 - Dec. 31
Rabbit, Quail	Nov. 16 - Feb. 10
Squirrel	Nov. 16 - Feb. 29
Duck	Nov. 26-29
Dove	Nov. 26 - Dec. 6
Western Goose	Nov. 26 - Jan. 31
Pennyrile Goose	Nov. 26 - Jan. 31
White-front Goose	Nov. 26 - Jan. 31
Snow Goose	Nov. 26 - Jan. 31
Wilson Snipe	Nov. 26 - Jan. 31
Shotgun Turkey	Dec. 5 - Dec. 11
Duck	Dec. 7 to Jan. 31.
Muzzleloader	Dec. 12 - Dec. 20
Dove	Dec. 19 - Jan. 10
Youth Deer	Dec. 26 - 27
Snow Conservation	Feb. 1-5
Snow Coservation	Feb. 8 - March 31
Youth Waterfowl	Feb. 6-7

(Note: The above waterfowl seasons are proposed dates by the Kentucky Wildlife Commission and subject to federal approval. Also, Eastern Hunting Zones for Waterfowl are not listed).

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Local high school student takes monster chasing outdoors career

BY KATIE DAVIES

Most teenage girls spend their Saturday mornings curled up in bed watching television or engaging friends on social media.

Not this gal.

My free time is spent harnessed to a tree, battling the elements and honing my natural skills as a hunter. It's all part of my career-studies. I want to be an outdoors writer and maybe even a television show personality.

The only signal you get on the trail of a monster whitetail buck is the tell-tale signs he leaves on branches or in the soft earth. Technology, however, is part of my game, too. It has to be if you're going to make it in this industry. There's social media, then there's the technology that helps you score big bucks. It starts with high-tech gear and I have several sponsors that provide me with the best in the business.

A trail camera comes in handy and my bow has precision craftsmanship that seemingly defies aerodynamics. A buck in range is as good as taken, but the true mettle of a whitetail hunter is forged in bitter determination, patience and keen observation.

The months leading up to last year's whitetail hunting season was rewarding, but also a real struggle.

Repeating year after year as a successful trophy hunter is a daunting task. The chore was made more difficult because much of my time was devoted to high school classes and an afternoon job. Still, countless hours were spent doing my homework on harvesting a huge buck for the second straight season.

Just finding a trophy buck is tough. Getting the inside track on where one lives, feeds and breeds is the first step. Getting a shot is even tougher and making that shot... well, I think I've proven myself with the a bow and arrow. Success as a competition archer has given me the needed confidence required to draw down on a wall-hanger. Just give me a shot, that's my mission.

Perhaps that was what made a missed opportunity early last fall on a mature buck at Land Between the Lakes so disheartening. In fact, it haunted me day and night.

My cameraman and I had hunted LBL for several days. We found fresh sign of a nice buck and a few trail camera pictures backed up my notion that something really big was lurking in the big timber and rolling hills between the Tennessee and Cumberland rivers.

I forget the hours I'd sat motionless in the stand waiting for a chance at this buck. Then when he appeared one morning, my hard work was for naught.

The 160-class buck was chasing a doe. He closed quickly on position, and I waited too long to draw. The blonde-racked buck was standing 15 yards in front of me and a fellow along to film the hunt. We couldn't move. He'd spot the tiniest twitch. A buck like this doesn't grow a crown if he's stupid.

This big boy turned around and walked straight away. I was never presented another shot.

It's funny, but I felt like I had really let my cameraman down. Both of us had worked really hard to make it happen and I choked.

A few weeks later, I was really excited to get a chance to hunt in Ohio County. I had always heard about the monster bucks that have been taken there. I was hunting 300 acres on the outskirts of Beaver Dam. The first morning I got into the stand about 45 minutes before daylight. When it got light, I noticed that some corn we had put out prior to the hunt was gone. As the morning opened, there was a good bit of nearby deer activity, but no shooters. I was hunting a natural funnel in the back of a clover field. About 10 a.m., I took a break and then relocated my stand. The new location was next to a huge cedar tree. We trimmed enough limbs to film and shoot the hunt on videotape, but were careful not to make a mess of the area.

That afternoon, I had a 135-inch 8-pointer come in to a feeder that was spiked with C'mere Deer Corn

Coat. Several whitetails had shown up, but nothing to draw on.

The next morning I got back in the same stand 45 minutes before daylight. The plan was to hunt all day. I saw numerous deer move through the area, and some chasing smaller bucks. Right at dusk, a big body deer started moving my way. Unfortunately, darkness set in before the deer made its way close to enough to be sure, but I thought it was a mature buck. I stayed on the stand well into the darkness in order to avoid spooking the deer by getting down too soon. After the deer moved away, I slipped out.

This was supposed to be the last day I could hunt because I was a senior in high school and homework and classes were calling me back to reality. Because I had a special study program, I was able to miss one more day at school and it paid big dividends.

The next morning was perfect hunting weather, about 30 degrees. I got into the stand about 30 minutes before daylight. It was to be another full day's hunt, if necessary. When daylight broke there was no activity and I was becoming worried. Around 6:30 a.m., I was looking at the edge of a CRP field and saw a deer standing alone. I could tell it was a male whitetail. I lifted my Opti-Logic Binoculars and confirmed that it was a huge buck. He had a nice, blonde rack. The buck was sniffing around, apparently looking for doe. A series of grunt calls got the buck's attention, but he wouldn't commit to close the gap between his spot and mine. It was time to try the snort wheeze – the sound a deer makes to show his dominance around other males. It's like telling a buck to either leave the area or come fight. This big fellow lifted his head, postured and accepted the challenge. He headed right toward my stand. After about two minutes, however, he lost interest and began moving away. Another snort wheeze drew him a bit closer, but at about 50 yards, he started to veer into the woods. It was time for another grunt and wheeze.



Katie Davies was a senior in high school last year when she bagged this monster whitetail buck. She is a former student-outdoors writer for The Crittenden Press and a competitive tournament archer.

That did the trick. He went to full alert, looking for combat. As he passed the feeder, I knew the buck was within range. I eased up my Opti-Logic Range Finder to pinpoint the distance – 18 yards. Perfect!

I pulled back the string on my Xpedition bow and the buck stopped to sniff where other deer had been feeding earlier. I didn't have a good angle and the string was getting very heavy. Finally he turned to the left and I put my Copper John Sights 20-yard pin right behind his shoulder and released the arrow.

My heart was pounding so hard. I was not exactly sure where the 100 grain Swacker broadhead had pierced the buck, but my cameraman saw it all. As the deer bolted, he said, "You smoked him."

The buck ran about 35 yards and dropped.

I could see him on the ground through my binoculars. It looked to me like a world record. I wanted to

get down immediately and go the deer, but I knew I had to wait and make sure the buck didn't get up. Meantime, we shot some takes in the stand to help improve the video footage and I sent a text to my dad about the success.

Finally, after ample time had passed, I climbed down and walked over to see this trophy up close. The body size was enormous and his rack was huge.

It was early November and the area was full of rifle hunters. After taking the buck out to a nearby road, it was like a party. Everyone was stopping by and checking out this monster whitetail which turned the tape at almost 175 inches on the Boone and Crockett scoring system. My second straight "Booner!"

•Author Katie Davies is a Crittenden County High School graduate and an aspiring professional archer and hunter.

CRITTENDEN OUTDOORS

BUCKED UP! Chambliss repeats title



2014
Jacob Chambliss scores back-to-back in youth big buck contest. Above is last year's deer.

Fredonia gunner does it again in '14

"What a surprise!" says 13-year-old Jacob Chambliss of Fredonia.

Indeed it was!

Another trophy whitetail in 2014 made the young man from Fredonia the Marion Big Buck Contest's first ever back-to-back youth champion. In fact, it is the first time in the whole 10 years of the contest sponsored by Hodge Outdoor Sports and Marion Tourism that there has been a repeat champion.

"We have never had anyone win it two times," said Michelle Edwards, tourism director. "Jacob must be a great hunter," she said, pointing to the 10-pointer he took to win the 2013 big buck title and the 11-pointer he bagged this time.

Chambliss and his father won both of the big buck contests a year ago, and this past season

dad was right there by his side as the two put in the hard work it takes to harvest a trophy buck.

"I spent all summer checking trail cameras and putting out corn and minerals with my dad and brother," Chambliss said. "We got a few trail cam pics of some good looking bucks that really needed another year or two. We didn't have any pics that I would consider big bucks."

As summer morphed into fall, the Chambliss clan kept hoping something good would show up on their cameras, but it never did. At that point, it looked like the season could be a real bummer unless something changed.

"Dad and I hunted as much as we could during bow season with no luck," he said. "Youth rifle season and muzzleloader season was more of the same. The only deer any of us were seeing were small bucks and does."

When rifle season arrived in November, Chambliss couldn't wait to hit the woods. Not seeing any-

thing substantial to that point increased Chambliss's anxiousness.

He knew the rut could make a major difference as deer become much more active with bucks moving outside of their normal range in search of females. But first, there was some youth sports obligations that got in the way on opening weekend.

"We weren't able to hunt until the third day of rifle season. It was abnormally warm on that Monday afternoon. I climbed in the blind with my dad, and my little brother climbed in the blind with my mom, just like last year," Chambliss said.

With the warm weather, deer were not moving at all. "I sat there thinking about all the Instagram pictures of big bucks that have been shot, and wondering if I would even see one deer that afternoon," said the teenager.

With the day's light fading fast through the afternoon's western sky, Chambliss thought his hunt was about over when his father, Kevin, spotted movement nearby.



2013
"Dad said, 'A buck just chased a doe out of the woods,'" he recalled.

Chasing a doe across a picked cornfield was a buck with his head down, making it nearly impossible for the young hunter to see the antlers and judge whether it was a

Continued on Page 17

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Carcass care is key to quality venison, trophy preservation, legal disposal

Hunters need to know the proper way to care for and dispose of their deer carcass before and after processing, says the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources.

If you plan on having your trophy preserved by a taxidermist, the best policy is to keep the hide clean and undamaged. If you remove the head from the carcass yourself, remember to leave more than enough skin beyond the neck area. You can never have too much hide, says local taxidermist Todd Lucas.

If you will be cutting up the venison yourself, be sure to get the animal into a cool, shady area as quickly as possible. Never leave it in direct sunlight, even during fall days when temperatures might seem appropriate for hanging a deer with safety. November sunshine can cause problems quickly for the carcass.

Crittenden County's Hunters for the Hungry program will accept deer donated by hunters. The Family Butcher Shop will accept

donated deer at 346 Rooster Lane off Ky. 654 North Monday through Saturday. Hunters for the Hungry operates on donations, so please give to the organization when you donate a deer. Your contribution helps pay processing fees. The venison is distributed by the Crittenden County Food Bank at the former health department building in Marion.

One thing hunters should never do is to discard a carcass improperly or illegally. Leaving the remains on the property where you harvested the deer is the best disposal method. If you are hunting on another person's property, ask the landowner where you can dispose of the deer's carcass and offer to bury it. Respect the landowner's

wishes. Deer hunters should never throw deer remains alongside the road or onto someone else's property.

"Disposing of it on the side of the road is not a good idea, it is littering," said Tina Brunjes of the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources. "This practice makes hunters look bad. Nobody wants to see or smell a deer car-

cass. Be considerate of others. Just because you've taken a deer, that doesn't mean it's over. Disposing of the carcass is part of the process of deer hunting."

Hunters who plan to carry a carcass out of Kentucky need to know the laws in the destination state and the states through which the deer will be transported.

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CRITTENDEN OUTDOORS

WHERE HAVE BIG BUCKS GONE?

Hunters keeping trophy deer under wraps for protection

STAFF REPORT

Ever wonder where all the big bucks have gone?

Truth is, they've gone to Florida, Georgia, Alabama and the myriad of other states where Crittenden County's new breed of hunter originates.

"Hunters have become more secretive," said Philip Sharp, a Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife biologist who lives in Crittenden County.

"Used to, if someone killed a 160 class or bigger buck, they'd haul it around on the tailgate for two weeks because they wanted everyone to see it," he said. "Now, these guys don't even want their families to know about it if they get a really big buck."

The reason?
It's all about money.

Sharp, who closely follows trends in outdoor recreation, said hunters keep their trophies secret in order to protect their leases,

and the prices they pay for them.

Twenty or 25 years ago, there were only a few acres leased for hunting in Crittenden County. Those lands that were rented to hunters fetched about \$2 to \$5 an acre. Now, land leases for \$10 to \$25 an acre – sometimes more.

Darrin Tabor, a local real estate agent who brokers outdoor recreation property, said there's no question that hunters have gone underground when it comes to the bucks they're taking.

"They don't want to broadcast what they're taking because they don't want someone else to come along and steal their lease," Tabor said.

"I wish we still had to check deer in at Hodge's like we used to. It was a community event back then, people would stand around at the check station and talk about hunting or the big buck that just

Continued on page 15

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CRITTENDEN OUTDOORS

LEGENDS OF THE FALL

Crittenden provides celebrities bang for their buck

BY CHRIS EVANS
THE CRITTENDEN PRESS

There is a popular television show called "Dancing with the Stars." Nearly everyone in the country has at least heard something about it, making the program a household name.

Crittenden County could probably put its moniker on the tongues of many Americans by producing a show called "Hunting with the Pros." In fact, there is actually one called "Major League Bowhunter" and it stars former professional baseball players Matt Duff and Chipper Jones. Duff pitched for the St. Louis Cardinals and Jones was a beloved third-base all-star, National League MVP and most likely a future Hall of Famer for the Atlanta Braves. The two of them were in Crittenden County in September shooting a segment for their program that is broadcast regularly on The Sportsman Channel.

Chris Redman, a former NFL quarterback (Atlanta Falcons), graces the cover of this year's Crittenden Outdoors Hunting Guide. Redman's picture with a nice western Kentucky buck is courtesy of Curt Phelps, an avid local hunter, who has been hosting Redman on hunts for several years. Another former NFL quarterback Jake Locker



Former Tennessee Titans quarterback Jake Locker shows off a buck he took in this area last season.

(Tennessee Titans) also visits regularly for hunts with Phelps.

Redman owns property here, too. He doesn't just pass through. New York Yankees third baseman Chase Headley is also a local landowner. They are just a few of the star-studded camouflaged gunners that might roam into town for lunch on a rainy

fall day.

Kory Wheeler, who owns a couple of Marion restaurants, says celebrities are common at the Main Street Italian Grill and The Front Porch. She also does some catering for hunters who are too busy to drive to town.

Dustin Johnson, the No. 7 ranked professional golfer in the United States, has been to Marion this fall on a hunting trip. And celebrity hunters like Jackie Bushman of Buckmasters fame and Spook Spann are regulars to the area and other famous hunters like Bill Jordan and Michael Waddell have spent time in our forests. Brett Favre, the certain-NFL Hall of Fame quarterback of the Green Bay Packers, spends some time in the northern part of the county hunting deer near the Tradewater River.

"I saw him here a couple of years ago," said local real estate agent Darrin Tabor. "He's a big man. I mean a big fellow. A lot bigger than you'd think."

Tabor said some of his other real estate connections hosted members of the famous "Duck Dynasty" Robertson family on a late September hunt on a Crittenden County.

Mark Williams, an agent for Whitetail Properties, says he's marketed property to Colts kicker Adam Vinatieri and former NFL

quarterback Kerry Collins.

Kentucky's reputation as a destination for hunters has improved over the past decade, Williams explains. In 2012, Kentucky produced more Boone and Crockett bucks than any other state. That's a major measuring stick, he said.

"These guys obviously have the money to invest, but they're looking for the most bang for their buck, too," Williams said.

His company, Whitetail Properties, specializes in brokering hunting and recreational property. The niche industry has helped promote this otherwise remote and uninspiring area to hunters, but there are various other factors that help make this area attractive, Williams said.

"It's appealing for a number of reasons," he said, including relatively inexpensive over-the-counter hunting licenses with no quotas for out-of-state hunters, land values are much lower than other traditional trophy hunting states like Illinois and Iowa, taxes are reasonable and the chance for a big buck are high, especially when you figure the tolerably low number of hunters and trophy whitetails per square mile.

"When you put all that together, it's very attractive for hunters," Williams added.

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CRITTENDEN OUTDOORS

BIG RIVERS WMA

New opportunities coming for WMA in Crittenden-Union

Big Rivers Wildlife Management Area and State Forest between Sturgis and Marion is open for public hunting. It officially opened in the fall of 2013 just in time for the quota deer hunt.

This wildlife management area totals 6,812 acres of fields and woodlands at the confluence of the Ohio and Tradewater rivers in Union and Crittenden counties.

No special permit is required for entry. However, there is a quota on deer during the rifle season.

"This area offers excellent deer, turkey and squirrel hunting, plus excellent hiking and wildlife viewing opportunities," said Scott Harp, regional wildlife coordinator for the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources. "We also have several habitat projects currently planned to enhance quail and rabbit hunting."

Game Management Foreman John Zimmer said development of new outdoors opportunities has been in full swing on the Big Rivers WMA.

"We planted 20,000 shrubs this past February. They are bordering the fields directly behind the office. They will be acting as a shrub corridor, which wildlife will use for escape cover and nesting habitat. It also adds diversity amongst our larger crop fields," Zimmer said.

Part of the recent management plan included a prescribed burn on about 300 acres.

"They were mostly in thick, neglected areas that we were wanting to come back in on to do follow-up treatment on honey locust and sericea lespedeza," Zimmer said.

Three new shallow water areas have been established for waterfowl. Two of the areas are near Stump Lake, which was also recently revitalized.

Zimmer said the shallow water areas will help attract and hold waterfowl.

"All together, we are creating around 30 more acres of waterfowl habitat," he said.

The WMA plans on stocking Stump Lake this fall with bluegill and catfish and then bass next spring. The first new wood duck brood was raised on Stump Lake this year. The lake – a one-time hot spot for local fishermen – had been drained by the previous landowner before the WMA was formed.

Big Rivers is open under statewide regulations for squirrel, rabbit, quail, furbearer and fall turkey seasons. However, there is a special quota drawing for rifle deer hunts. Applications are due in the late summer. That is the only opportunity for rifle hunting for deer on the WMA, except for free youth seasons in October and December.

Big Rivers WMA and State Forest is otherwise open for archery/crossbow deer season (except during the quota hunt) and is open for the free youth weekend hunt in December.

While the area offers adequate parking, some of the road infrastructure is still under evaluation and development. Maps of the area are available online at fw.ky.gov. Click the maps and on-line services tab, then the wildlife management areas tab. Boat-in access to interior areas is allowed.



View Map Online

http://fw.ky.gov/More/Documents/BigRiversWMA_and_StateForest_all.pdf



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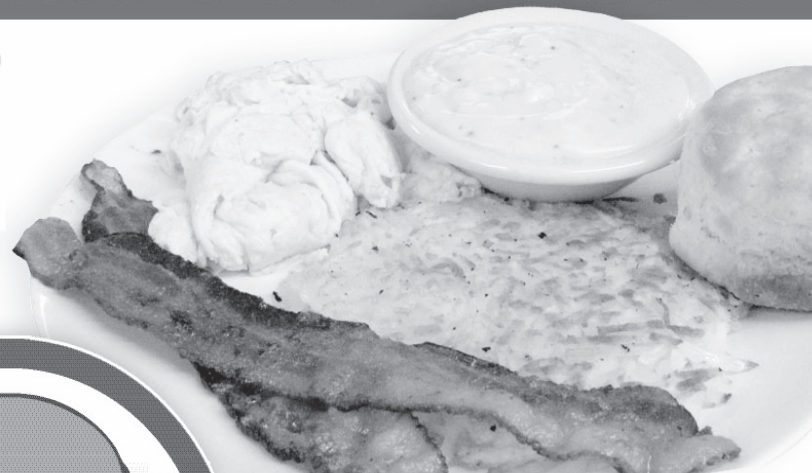
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CRITTENDEN OUTDOORS

KDFWR ends investigation; cougar probably brought here

KENTUCKY AFIELD

Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife law enforcement officials ended in August active investigation into the circumstances surrounding the December 2014 appearance of a 125-pound mountain lion on a Bourbon County farm.

"We've exhausted all our leads," said Major Shane Carrier. "We have conducted our investigation and worked jointly with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service law enforcement officers to determine how this animal arrived in Kentucky. At this time, we are unable to definitively say who brought the lion into the state."

Kentucky state law prohibits persons from possessing inherently dangerous animals, such as mountain lions, or bringing them into the state without proper transportation permits.

On Dec. 15, 2014, a conservation officer responding to a complaint found the approximately 5-year-old male mountain lion treed by a homeowner's Rhodesian ridgeback dog in a populated area about two miles northeast of Paris shortly before dark. While en route, the officer consulted with a wildlife biologist and learned tranquilizing was not a vi-

able or an available option. Due to overwhelming public safety concerns, the officer shot the lion, which then leaped and disappeared into the underbrush. When backup officers arrived shortly thereafter, they searched in the dark and found it dead in the brush nearby.

Mountain lions, apex predators once native to Kentucky, were extirpated from the state more than 150 years ago. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has declared the eastern mountain lion to be extinct.

"These facts figured heavily in our decision to euthanize the lion when we encountered it," said Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Biologist Steven Dobey. "A released or escaped captive lion that has lost its fear of humans is a much greater threat to public safety than a truly wild, free-ranging lion."

Necropsy results and tooth-aging analyses indicate the lion was a 5-year-old male, 125 pounds, and in good physical condition and health. DNA analyses link the genetic origin of the lion to a population in the Black Hills of South Dakota, more than 1,100 miles northwest of Paris, Ky. A few mountain lions in western states have moved eastward, but neither law enforcement investigators nor

wildlife biologists found any evidence that suggests this mountain lion made its way to Kentucky on its own.

Dobey noted that a 5-year old lion should already have an established home range and matured beyond the roaming age. Long distance traveling is typically the behavior of a 1½-to 2-year-old mountain lion.

"The age of this lion is huge," said Dobey. "This was a mature adult. We have consulted with western biologists who work closely with lions and they agree that a 5-year-old lion is living where it is going to spend the rest of his life."

"Furthermore, this animal was in remarkably good condition with few cuts and scars, and no broken teeth or claws often found on wild mountain lions of the same age," he said.

Dobey said the absence of previous sighting reports and trail camera photos of this lion also are significant. "If this lion came here from the Black Hills on its own, it would have moved across South Dakota, Nebraska, Iowa, Missouri, Illinois, Indiana and into Kentucky during the peaks of those states' big game and deer hunting seasons," he said.

"That means moving past thousands of

hunters on the ground and possibly tens of thousands of infrared trail cameras. Biologists in midwestern states have seen western mountain lions move into their states, but with all the cameras hunters use now to scout game, there are good records and photos of those animals with locations, dates and time stamps."

Fish and Wildlife Deputy Commissioner and Wildlife Biologist Dr. Karen Waldrop agreed.

"There is no evidence supporting this animal traveled that distance on its own, or even spent any length of time on the ground here. This was either a released or escaped captive lion."

"Lions that become associated with people are extremely dangerous," she said. "They cannot be released. Sometimes well-meaning people do not realize that keeping wild animals almost always means condemning them to an early demise."

Kentucky Fish and Wildlife has released its investigative reports of the case, including the DNA analysis of the animal. This information is posted online at fw.ky.gov, the department's website.

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CRITTENDEN OUTDOORS

It's the Law: Hunters must complete HIP Survey

Hunters possess a long history of taking actions that benefit wildlife conservation. They tax themselves and buy licenses, permits and stamps that support the vitality of both game and non-game animals.

The Harvest Information Program (H.I.P.) of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is an evolution of these long-standing practices, say wildlife officials. This year, changes to the program caused some consternation among outdoors enthusiasts who must answer a few questions after purchasing their Kentucky Migratory Game Bird Waterfowl Hunting Permit.

"People are always concerned about change," said John Brunjes, migratory bird program coordinator for the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources. "We previously collected this information in a manner that produced insufficient harvest data. So, we are changing how we do it."

Brunjes explained the changes are not made to place an additional burden on hunters.

The H.I.P. program came about

Doves, Ducks included

Everyone who plans to hunt migratory birds this season – including ducks and doves – must fill out a Harvest Inventory Program or HIP Survey online. It asks two questions, whether you plan to hunt migratory birds this year and whether you did last year. You will receive a confirmation number which must be present with you while hunting migratory birds. It's the law.

because biologists and management professionals at both the state and federal level realized they didn't have an accurate number of migratory bird hunters.

"We could guess by the number of migratory bird – waterfowl hunting permits sold," Brunjes said. "But, those who purchase a senior/disabled license or a Sportsman's license get a permit with their license, whether they hunt migratory birds or not."

A similar situation exists for the federal migratory bird hunting permit, commonly called a duck

stamp. Many purchase them to help with conservation of waterfowl, but don't hunt.

"Consequently, we didn't know how many birds were being harvested," Brunjes said. "The H.I.P. survey gives us a tool to tell us how many hunters we have in Kentucky. It also shows us how many of each species is being harvested as well as the age and sex ratio of the harvested birds."

Completing the H.I.P. survey allows the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to classify hunters into a sampling group based on the species hunted and the number of migratory birds harvested in order to get more comprehensive, voluntary information later.

"They may contact you via mail to participate in these surveys or they may ask you to participate in a wing collection survey," Brunjes said. "This information gives biologists at the state and federal level more accurate data to help better manage these populations."

Inconsistent data in Kentucky and across the nation usually

means more conservative dove, duck and goose seasons.

The fluctuation in the daily duck bag limit for canvasback ducks over the past 10 to 12 years is an example of the impact of insufficient data. This data also showed a dove harvest estimate of about 633,000 birds in 2013, but only 255,000 birds last year. This wild fluctuation is likely rooted in inconsistent H.I.P. data.

The H.I.P. process is simple and

it takes less than five minutes. On the Kentucky Fish and Wildlife webpage at fw.ky.gov, click on the "My Profile" tab on the upper left section of the page. This will bring you to a page that asks for some basic information to confirm your identity. After completing the H.I.P. questions, you will receive a confirmation number that must be written on your hunting license or Kentucky Migratory Game Bird – Waterfowl Hunting Permit.

GONE

Continued from page 10 rolled in," Tabor continued. "Now, they keep them hidden until they're out of state. I can't even get the guys who hunt on my property to give me pictures of what they're shooting."

Sharp and Tabor agree that much of today's hunting in Crittenden County is by residents of the deep South. Local hunters still lucky enough to have a place to hunt are also reluctant to publicize

their success. Only a few years ago, the newspaper was full of hunters showing off trophy bucks. Nowadays, only a few trickle in at the newspaper.

The trophy heads leave Crittenden County very inconspicuously and now hang on walls in the South.

"I have friends who come up here from Florida and they take very nice deer, but they load them in a truck and head back to Florida and very few people know what they've taken," Sharp said.



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CRITTENDEN OUTDOORS

Hunting's impact moves big bucks

The Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service have a great stake in the hunting and fishing industries of Kentucky. "Fishing, hunting, and wildlife viewing together comprise a top industry in Kentucky and across the nation," said Benjy Kinman, Deputy Commissioner with Kentucky Fish and Wildlife. "These activities are important to the social fabric of Kentucky's communities, in addition to supporting tens of thousands of jobs and generating the funds for fish and wildlife conservation in the Commonwealth."

A recent study of 2011 data shows the tremendous interest in outdoors activities in the commonwealth. The survey is conducted every five years by fish and wildlife officials and the U.S. Census Bureau. It has become one of the most important sources of information on fish and wildlife recreation in the United States.

Following are highlights from that national survey of hunting and wildlife-associated recreation:

- 554,000 people 16 years and older spent a combined total of 10.2 million days fishing.

- 347,000 people 16 years and older spent a combined total of 12.2 million days hunting.

- 1.3 million people 16 years and older watched wildlife in Kentucky.

- \$2.9 billion total was spent on wildlife-related recreation in Kentucky.

- \$807 million was spent in Kentucky on fishing-related activities.

- \$798 million was spent in

Kentucky on hunting-related activities.

- \$773 million was spent in Kentucky on wildlife-watching activities.

- More than 90 million U.S. residents 16 years old and older participated in some form of wildlife-related recreation in 2011, up 3 percent from five years earlier. The increase was primarily among those who fished and hunted.

- Wildlife recreationists in the U.S. spent \$144.7 billion in 2011 on their activities, which equated to one percent of the Gross Domestic Product. Of the total amount spent, \$49.5 billion was trip-related, \$70.4 billion was spent on equipment, and \$25.1 billion was spent on other items such as licenses and land leasing and ownership.

- The number of people who hunted or fished or both rose from 33.9 million in 2006 to 37.4 million in 2011.

- 71.8 million U.S. residents observed, fed, and/or photographed wildlife in 2011. Almost 68.6 million people wildlife watched around their homes, and 22.5 million people took trips of at least one mile from home primarily to watch wildlife.

- Of the 46.7 million people who observed wild birds, 88 percent did so around their homes and 38 percent on trips a mile or more from home.

- People spent \$54.9 billion on their wildlife-watching trips, equipment, and other items in 2011. This amounted to \$981 on average per spender for the year.

Deer are bonus at Land Between the Lakes

While Land Between the Lakes (LBL) National Recreation area in western Kentucky offers a variety of quota hunting opportunities for modern firearms, it is also a grand destination for archers. The requirements for bowhunting are more convenient.

Quota rifle hunt applications are generally due over the summer. If there are unfilled quota permits for the Youth Hunt, those can be pur-

chased in early September. Archers need not apply. The 2015-16 bow season is Sept. 15 to Jan. 18, except on quota hunt days and one day immediately before each quota hunt.

Hunters need only have a valid Kentucky license and a \$25 LBL Hunter Use Permit.

Deer taken in LBL are bonus animals. They do not count against statewide limits.

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7-Day Hunting (not valid for deer or turkey)	Not available	\$55.00
Annual Youth Hunting (ages 12-15 only)	\$6.00	\$10.00
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Sportsman's License	\$95.00	Not available
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Statewide Deer Permit (two deer)	\$35.00	\$120.00
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Additional Deer Permit (two deer)	\$15.00	\$15.00
Spring Turkey Permit (two turkeys)	\$30.00	\$75.00
Youth Turkey Permit (one turkey, spring or fall)	\$10.00	\$15.00
Fall Turkey Permit (four turkeys)	\$30.00	\$75.00
Migratory Bird/Waterfowl Permit	\$15.00	\$15.00

Youth Big Buck

Continued from page 8
shooter or not.

"Though I couldn't see his horns, I remember him being two times as big as the doe he was chasing," Chambliss remarked. "Dad was sitting beside me checking the buck out with his binoculars. All at once dad said, 'I think he's a good one Jake, get on him.'"

Chambliss poked his trusty .25-06 out of the blind and tried to steady the crosshairs on the moving buck. The 11-pointer was about 150 yards away when he stopped, facing the blind dead on. Not a good shot to take.

"He stood there for what seemed like forever before finally

turning broadside," Chambliss said. "When he turned, dad said, 'There's your shot Jake, bust him.'" His first round hit the buck, but the big whitetail was still on his feet. He kicked another shell into the chamber and took the fatal shot.

"Within minutes all four of us were standing over my buck just like last year," Chambliss recalls. "He was a big bodied, broken-up 11-pointer. It was great to have my family there to share the moment. As it turns out, we never had a single picture of this buck all year nor did we have a picture of a buck this big all year."

"Just goes to show how the rut can change things in the blink of an eye," he added.



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CRITTENDEN OUTDOORS

Coyote Cutthroats

Local duo has no mercy during late winter song dog hunting contests

Those late evening serenades by predators known as song dogs tend to be their undoing when it the annual Hodge Outdoor Sports Coyote Contest kicks off.

James Reece and Beau Beckner, two Fredonia hunters, won their second straight contest late last winter sponsored by the local outdoors store and Marion Tourism Commission.

Reece said to be a successful coyote hunter one needs to do his homework.

"It's like any other hunting, you have to scout," he said.

The duo spends a good bit of time hunting together. They start after deer season and

call coyotes toward their weapons well into March, just before turkey hunters take over the woods.

The easiest way to locate a coyote is to listen for his song at dusk.

"You can figure out where they're denning by listening for them howling," Reece said. "We pinpoint those areas and then leave those spots alone. We hunt all the time, but we leave the better spots alone until the tournament."

In early 2015, the pair dropped five song dogs. Because new laws allow for night hunting, Reece was able to bag one coyote well after dark on a cold February Friday, hunting

solely by the light of the moon. He doesn't like using artificial light although the its allowed during February and March.

Reece said coyotes are often scared off by the lights and because you have to use a shotgun at night, he prefers luring them with a rabbit squealer on a moonlit night.

Reece hunted alone Friday because his partner had to work. The next morning, they started early. By 7 a.m., Saturday they had four predators down. They scored a double on the first setup, then almost pulled another double 500 yards away on the second setup, but one of them got away wounded.

The next coyote came in alone. Because

it's breeding season, most hunts provide a chance at two because they're running in pairs.

Although most of his success comes with a mouth-squealer, he says a howler can be good this time of year. It's like rattling antlers during the deer rut, he explained.

Reece has entered the coyote contest every year since it started five winters ago. He has shared the title with partners three times and was second twice.

"It's a good thing we got them when we did because the wind picked up Saturday morning and we didn't do any good after that," Reece added.



Beau Beckner and James Reece won their second straight coyote contest title late last winter.

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