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Issue 216

March 2012



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BUCK**

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

**Fishing
TIPS**

**B.A.S.S.
News**

**DNR
Updates**

Outdoor Photos

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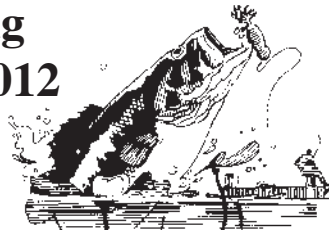
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Cover Photo

Jeremy Woods, from Cool Ridge, had bow success with this 10 point. It grossed 151 on the Pope & Young scoring sytem. The buck was taken in Wyoming County.

Early warmer weather has helped in early fishing success. Email your pics of your 2012 fish. Form is on page 38.

This magazine is online each month : www.wvasportsman.net
Back issues are there too.

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Marines Have Landed

One of the most interesting thing that happened while my wife, Betty, and I owned Elk Springs was when the 2nd Recon Marines came to Randolph County for exercises. This was in August, 1991.

At the time, Valley Fork Road leading to Elk Springs was all gravel. As was Dry Branch Road from Elk Springs to Mace on US Rte. 219.

One day there was this enormous dust cloud and deep rumbling noises coming down towards our country store. We watched in fascination as dozens of military vehicles and armory slowly passed our store and headed towards Mace on Dry Branch Road. We didn't have a clue where they were going as there had not been anything in the papers, nor TV nor radio, about

any military maneuvers happening in our area. It took hours for the dust to clear.

The next day several customers came in with information on what was going on. After sifting through many false rumors we were finally able to ascertain as fact that it was the 2nd Marine Recon and they were here for two weeks of training. And that they were bivouacked on Elk Mountain, about five miles down the road from us.

Over the next few days we forgot about them. Then one morning bright and early a young man dressed in camo fatigues came in the store. He was rubbing his hands together and said, "Dang it's cold! Do you guys have any coffee?"

We always had the coffee pot on

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at Elk Springs and it was free to the public. The young Marine promptly wolfed down about three cups in succession. He finally warmed up standing next to the pot-bellied stove.

We asked if he was part of the recon team camped up on Elk Mountain? He replied, "Yes, but if anyone from my company comes in - - you never saw me!"

He went on to tell us the two-week exercise was strictly survival training. His company had no tents or sleeping bags. They had to live off the land and no fires were allowed. This was the first hot cup

continue to the next page

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Gene and Roseanna Hines



Michelle Weekley shot a big buck.
Photo courtesy Of Crossroads General
Store near Newark.

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of coffee he had had since they arrived.

He also said it had frosted every night on Elk Mountain since they had been here. He asked, "Is it always this cold here in August?"

It was his first time in West Virginia. We told him that were having a somewhat rare high-pressure system and that we were about a month early for frosts up high in the mountains. He asked about our business here and we gave him some snacks as they were not allowed to carry money during survival training. He left very grateful.

The next morning another Marine came in freezing to death. He said, "My buddy swore me to secrecy - - but said you guys had hot coffee." He, too, gulped it down standing next to the stove.

He told us all his buddies were freezing. They had to sleep on the ground with nothing but summer clothing. They were not allowed to sleep in or under any of the ve-



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hicles. Nothing hot to eat or drink - - just cold C-rations. Called them RTE's (Ready to Eat).

To get to the store he had to walk about five miles down the gravel road leading from Dry Branch Rd. to the top of the Elk Strip (about 4500 ft. altitude). He then had to walk about five miles on Dry Branch to get to Elk Springs.

After warming his buns, he said, "My buddy told me you raise trout here." We gave him a quick synop-

continue to the next page



Craig Booher, from Ona, shot a nice 9 point buck.

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sis of our business.

He asked, "Is there anyway you guys could give me a trout? I can't pay you now, but I could mail you a check later." I laughed and said, "Here take this rod and reel and go down to the pond and catch you a couple - - on the house. It's the least we can do for you guys that keep us safe." I gave him a container of worms and a stringer.

A few minutes later he came back with two nice sized rainbows. He asked us for some matches so he could hide in the woods and cook them over an open fire. He had a knife to gut and clean them.

He thanked us profusely and asked if we lived close by. We told him just up Valley Fork Road a bit. He asked if we had curtains or shades on all of our windows. We answered in the negative.

He informed us, since we had been so nice to him, that part of their survival training was night

exercises. They would spread out in all directions of Elk Mountain and spy on the locals. And they would write up a critique of everything they observed on the next day and give to their platoon sergeant, who would pass the reports on up the line after he had read them. He said that his buddies delighted in catching adults in comprising positions - - military humor with a spicy write-up!

He emphasized not to look for them cause we'd never see them. He laughed, "Even though one of our guys made a little too much noise a couple nights ago and just about got shot by a local for his sloppiness. The Marine was compelled to write this up in his report. His sergeant wasn't a bit happy with him.

From the directions where the Marine described the happening, I figured it was Mingo Flats and probably my buddy, Andy Sharp,

was the one holding the shotgun. Andy was not one to mess with and the soldier was lucky he didn't come away with his butt riddled with buckshot!

That evening when we got home, we covered all our windows with dark sheets!

Well, it seems the secret was out - - the 2nd Recon Marines had found a place to get hot coffee and fresh trout. Over the next 8-10 days we had several visitors.

continue to the next page



Amanda Lamb, from Glenville, shot a nice 10 point in Wirt Co.

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During the second and last week of training, it seemed every day a new Marine would come in the store. They were all different than the ones before. I guess they figured if they were successful once without being caught by a superior officer, they didn't want to push the envelope.

In almost every case they stopped by early in the morning. Hot coffee and the pot-bellied stove were on their minds. It was still frosting on Elk Mountain. And each time a new one left it was always the same departing remarks: "You never saw me."

Fresh trout were always on their minds, too. Some Marines were in a hurry, in case someone caught them at the store. For them we would net a couple trout and send them on their way with snacks and matches.



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Others would rather catch their own at our pay (free for them) pond. The one thing I remember above all else is these were the most polite young men I'd ever been around.

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Betty concurs. We talked about their home towns and many other things. Their life in the Marines and their sense of patriotism. I remember one young Marine was a minor league pitcher with the Pittsburgh Pirates organization.

continue to the next page

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He was soon to be discharged and planned on pursuing his dream of playing in the majors. He promised to write me when he was brought up so I could follow his career. I gave him a business card with my phone number and address.

Towards the end of their training a military jeep pulled up in our parking lot. Two non-commissioned officers (Sergeants.) came in the store. This was the first time one of their vehicles had showed up.

The same questions were always asked by new Marines in the store: "Whew! Is it always this cold around here in August?" We smilingly gave them the same answers as the others.

One of the Sgt.'s said, "I under-



Robbie Gillispie landed an 8 pound walleye at Summersville Lake.

stand you guys raise some mighty tasty trout here?" He was smiling which was a relief. He went on, "Our company commander is on his way down here and wants to talk to you two."

"Uh oh - - we're in trouble," we thought!

About that time another jeep pulled up. A lean Marine officer got out and came inside the store. He introduced himself and his two

Sergeants and we introduced ourselves to them.

The company commander smiled and said, "Well, we finally figured out what my troops have been surviving on. Fresh trout, hot coffee and snacks!

"They kept their trips down here a secret for a long time. Swore each other to secrecy.

"Finally one of my Sergeants

continue to page 13

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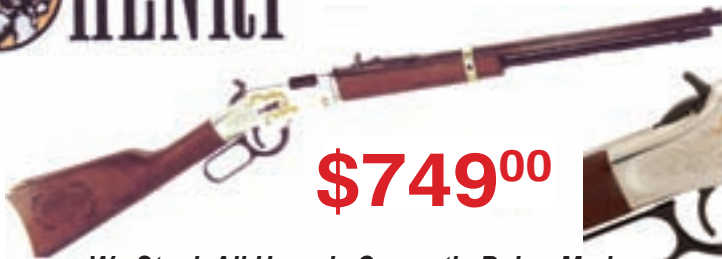


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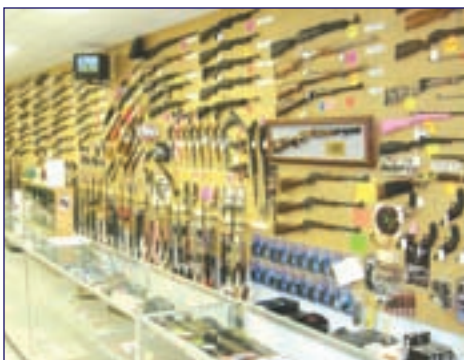
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Jim Sotts recently landed a 26 and 27 inch walleye at the Belleville Dam. He was using a hand tied hair jig he bought at Old & New Sports. *Photo courtesy of Old & New Sports in Ravenswood.*

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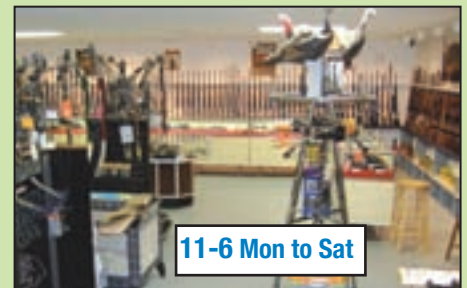
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Mail or Email your BIG BUCK photos. Form is on page 5. If you have sent one in and it is not in this issue, there will be buck photos for the next month. We appreciate all of the photos sent in! 2011 was an outstanding year for HUGE RACKS in WV.



Darrel Ballengee shot this 11 point buck. Photo courtesy of Crossroads General Store near Newark.



Tim Long brought in a nice buck. Photo courtesy of Middle Mountain Sporting Goods in Elkins.



Greg Lieving had success with his 10 point buck. Photo courtesy of Crossroads General Store near Newark.

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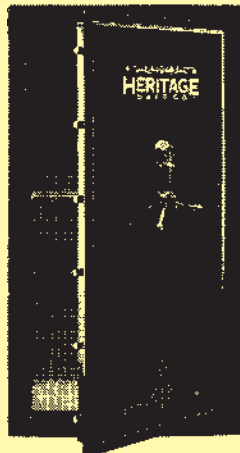
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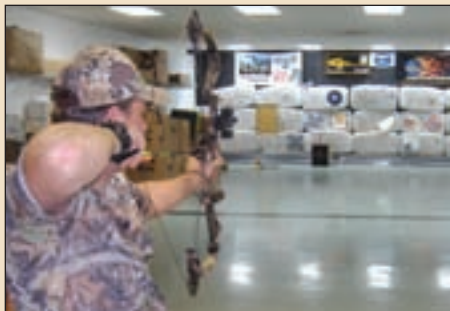
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caught wind of this conspiracy and they all fessed up!

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“When this trip was planned months ago, we knew we wanted to train in a remote area - - but we anticipated warm weather conditions in August! Is it always this cold here in August? (We answered). Under the unforeseen circumstances I can’t fault my men for their actions here. In my estimation they were surviving. Personally, I couldn’t understand why most of them weren’t losing weight (he belly laughed)! Now I know!

“This couldn’t have been done without the Wilson’s generosity! My men and I thank you for that!

“We are pulling out day after tomorrow. Tomorrow night we are having an end of training dinner party on the Elk.”

He went on to say he wanted to order X amount of fish, all the beer in our coolers, candy bars, pop, snacks and cigarettes.

The company commander marked



Gene Taylor, from Bim, shot a black bear.



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everything up on an official requisition form and said we’d be paid just as soon as they returned to gar-

rison.

We seined the trout and stuffed

continue to the next page

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in garbage bags. We practically cleaned the store out and loaded both jeeps. They had to call for another vehicle as everything wouldn't fit in the two jeeps!

As they were getting ready to pull out, I said, "Sir, may I see the requisition form?"

I had already discussed this with Betty and she agreed. The officer handed me the form and with a Sharpie pen I X'ed out all the trout (well over 100 averaging over 2 pounds)!

With a big smile, Betty said, "Dinner is on us!"

I followed with, "This is what we think of YOUR and OUR Marines!"

They were very grateful!

The day the 2nd Marine Recon left, we heard the rumble coming down the road and saw the dust as they got closer.

All the vehicles stopped in the road by the store. All the marines got out of their vehicles and surrounded the store. The company commander approached the porch carrying a folded 2nd Recon flag! He made a speech thanking us and unfolded the flag. It contained the signatures of every Marine present.

Before leaving he said in a loud voice, "THREE CHEERS FOR THE WILSON'S!" Hip Hip Horray! Hip Hip Horray! Hip Hip Horray! They bellowed!

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I've never had a fuzzy feeling like that in my life! Never will!

I know we both had tears roll-

ing down our faces as they pulled away.

Story by Jim Wilson



Heather and Greg Grant both scored nice deer on the same day in Wood.



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Lane Wins Bassmaster Classic

SHREVEPORT-BOSSIER CITY, La. — “Go, Chris Lane!”

As he stepped off the 2012 Bassmaster Classic stage on Sunday, Bobby Lane bellowed his brother’s name. Bobby had just been knocked out of contention. He knew Chris still had a good chance.

More than good. Chris Lane of Guntersville, Ala., won the Bassmaster Classic Sunday by more than 3 pounds, fending off hard-charging Greg Vinson. Lane’s victory was his second Bassmaster tournament title of 2012. Each came with a qualification for the 2013 Classic.

Lane brought 51 pounds, 6 ounces to the scales over three days to claim the 2012 crown of professional bass fishing and the \$500,000 first-place prize. It was his first Classic win.

Vinson, of Wetumpka, Ala., had a 47-15 total. Finishing third was first-day leader Keith Poche of Pike Road, Ala., with 45-15. Fourth was 2008 Classic champ Alton Jones of Woodway, Texas, whose tournament total was 45-14. Ott DeFoe of Knoxville, Tenn., shot from 15th to finish fifth with 44-14.

Lane started strong and stayed strong in the Red River competition that pitted 49 of the world’s best anglers against each other.



Mike Shrader hooked a 6 pound, 3 oz. smallmouth. *Photo courtesy of Three Rivers Edge in Hinton.*

Lane was sixth after the first day — tied at 16-4 with brother Bobby — then moved up into the lead after the second day with a 1-pound lead over Vinson, who continued to chase Lane into the final round.

Lane said he was exhausted as he waited in the wings for his turn at the scales on the Classic stage at

the CenturyLink Center in Bossier City.

“I’m ready to weigh these fish right now to see if I’ve won my first Bassmaster Classic,” Lane said. “I put everything on the line today. I felt I fished flawlessly today. I left everything I had to give on the wa-

ontinue to the next page

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ter.”

Lane’s catch Sunday was 15 pounds, 14 ounces, which came from two areas of Red River backwaters. He picked his first stop as the Sullivan’s area in Pool 4. Without much to show for the decision, Lane was on the verge of leaving to see if his second stop upriver in Pool 5 might hold better bass, but his instincts told him to stick around a few more minutes. It paid off with what proved to be a 6-10, his biggest of the day. By the time he left Pool 4, he had most of his day’s weight.

“I’ll never again second-guess a decision I make when fishing,” he said. “I listened to what my instincts told me to do, and it was right.”

He named two lures for helping him to victory. One was a Luck “E” Strike G4, a tube with a surprise inside. It has a new inner laminate of a contrasting chartreuse color (which Lane helped design) and the tube’s tentacles flash alternating colors on

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the fall. His other go-to lure was a Gambler Ugly Otter, a three-paddle soft plastic. He flipped the tube in shallow, stained water; he worked the Otter slowly in clearer water.

Vinson, an Elite pro who celebrated the birth of his first child just weeks ago, said he had the numbers of small bass but not the quality he needed out of the one shallow backwater area he stuck to all three days.

“I culled a lot, but only an ounce at a time. I needed to be culling pounds at a time,” he said.

Vinson, who brought in 13-7 on continue to the next page



Tom Cano (left), from Clarksburg shot this great Ohio buck.

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on Sunday, said he fished cleanly and was satisfied with his tournament — no regrets, no errors.

“I felt I had the area to win but it came down to it not giving up enough quality bites,” said Vinson, who stuck to one area all three days.

Otherwise, the area looked like the perfect setup. The fish were in a wintertime mode under matted vegetation when he first found the spot in practice. By Day One of the Classic, the bass had moved to nearby stumps, setting up to spawn.

“That made them very aggressive and they were feeding off the large amount of baitfish in there. I caught them really good (17-12),” he said.


By Day Two, the bass has shifted into a full spawn, throwing another challenge at Vinson to adapt. He had to slow down and sight-fish. Each afternoon, more fish moved in and his late bite was what he looked forward to.

But on Sunday, the fish had not yet moved up when Vinson decided he must leave to ensure he could lock back up to Pool 5 and check in on time.

“I didn’t see that new group of fish coming up until about 12:45, and I had to be out of there by no later than 1:30. I didn’t have enough

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time to capitalize on those fish,” he said.

Vinson’s lure arsenal included a NetBait Paca Craw in Cajun craw or black shadow colors; a NetBait Saltlick in black neon and in watermelon red; and a Bandit 100, a 1/4-ounce square-bill crankbait in chartreuse-black; and a 5/16-ounce War Eagle spinnerbait in chartreuse and white.

“I used a trailer hook on it, and
continue to the next page



Eddie Ramsey shot a good buck.

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that was important because the fish often just swatted at it, they weren't trying to eat it," he said.

Poche, fishing his first Classic, said he had a surprise at one point Sunday: He slipped into the water as he reached to lip a 4-pounder.

"I actually had it for a second, but it came unbuttoned and I fell in the water after it," he said. But that was early in the day. He boated about 15 fish all day to build his 16-10 bag, a showing that put him in contention for the crown up until the

final minutes.

Poche fished Sullivan's area of Pool 4, far in the back in a clearwater pond loaded with stumps, grass and fish. He had to run skinny water to reach it, kicking mud to clear a hump.

He pinpointed what he felt was his downfall.

"I didn't execute on Day Two. If I had, it would have been lights out, game over today," he said.

Carhartt Big Bass honors went to Poche for his a 6-pound, 13-ounce

largemouth on Day One. The bonus is \$1,000 for largest bass of the tournament.

Defending champ Kevin VanDam of Kalamazoo, Mich., finished with 40-10 in 11th place, pulling up from 18th place on Saturday.

"I just had a tough first day as far as executing," VanDam said. "Today I caught all the bites I had, so I had a better day, but you just can't have a bad day at this level against these guys."

VanDam is a four-time Classic winner who has qualified for 22 consecutive championships. After winning in 2010 and 2011, VanDam had been trying for a record third consecutive Classic title.



Young Brock Mitchell, from Roanoke, blasted a fine 8 point buck.



Keith Chapman, from Hurricane, shot a nice 10 point Putnam buck.

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Colin Greathouse, from Walton, went to Roane Co. for a 10 point.


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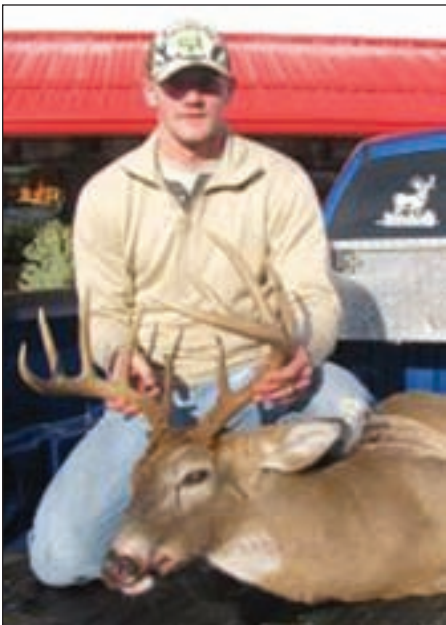
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Carl Massey brought in a giant Calhoun Co. 10 point. *Photo courtesy of Holbert's Store in Big Bend.*



Samuel Mills went to Wirt Co. for this heavy 8 pointer. *Photo courtesy of Holbert's Store in Big Bend.*



Gary Brown used a gun for this quality buck. *Photo courtesy of Middle Mountain Sporting Goods in Elkins.*

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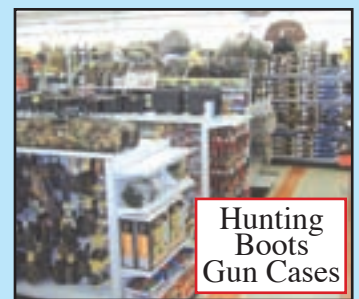
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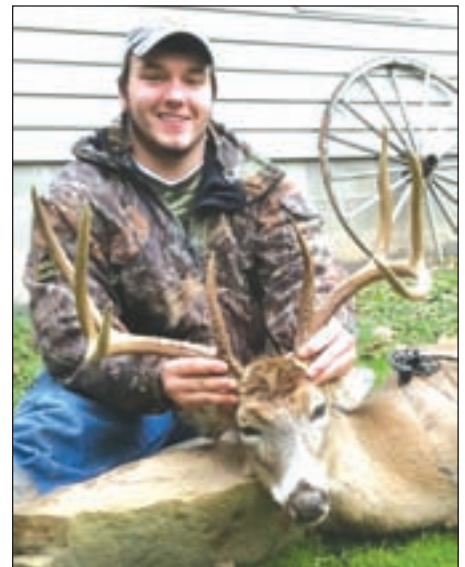
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Jason Ervin, from Tornado, went to Kanawha County for this bow 8 pt.



Ty Carter, from Raveswood, used a bow for this 10 point buck.



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Full Automatic Gun Now?

Editors Note: Recently an advertiser, WV Gun and Pawn in Ripley pg. 5, mentioned he wanted Slide Fire stocks in his ad. Very unusual device.

I'd like to start by saying that this product is going to shock you like nothing you have ever seen. I don't know what the future of it will be, and I don't think that anyone does at this point. At present it comes with an ATF letter saying that it is a legal AR-15 accessory, and several thousand have been sold. The use of "simulated automatic fire" here are my words, not those of the manufacturer. There isn't going to be any way to get around what this thing does and I think it is best to call it what it is.

The Slide Fire is a \$369 replacement stock for your AR-15 that when used properly, simulates au-

tomatic fire. Since the invention of the semi-automatic rifle people have been learning to do what is called "bump firing" the gun. You hold the gun in a loose way and allow it to rock back and forth against the trigger finger, which simulates automatic fire. It is fun, but it burns a lot of ammo without any real ability to aim at anything.

The inventor of the Slide Fire, Jeremiah Cottle, a US Air Force veteran of three conflicts, took the bump fire concept and eliminated all of the variables that makes bump firing impractical. The result is a product that bump fires perfectly, is completely controllable, every time, with no special training. There are no permanent modifications to the gun and installation of the Slide Fire does not impair function of the rifle at all.

"The Slide Fire simply allows you to shoot as fast as you want to," explains Mr. Cottle. "You can shoot one round, 2 rounds, 3 rounds, 15 rounds or a full magazine. It isn't
continue to the next page

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governed by a mechanical auto-sear. There are no moving parts in the Slide Fire and no springs. You hold your finger on the trigger rest and push forward to fire the gun. It is not automatic. Nothing is automatic. You actively fire every round, and if you stop pushing forward or you take your finger off the trigger the gun stops firing. It just helps you fire the gun in semi-automatic very fast. You don't need an auto-sear. You can fire the gun yourself as fast as you want."

If you have been around these parts a while you may remember another bump fire device that came onto the market in 2005, and that it too had at ATF letter when it first shipped. Several months down the road the ATF rescinded their letter and banned the device, which was called the Akins Accelerator. The

customer list of the company was taken by ATF and every purchaser had to send back the springs from the device along with an affidavit that it was no longer working or something. I never got one and I don't know about the operation of it and how it worked. But I do know that it was for the Ruger 10/22, not for an AR-15. I asked Mr. Cottle about his device and if he thought the same thing was going to happen to the Slide Fire that happened to the Akins Accelerator.

"I don't think so," he said, "but you never know." The major difference in the actual time-line of the invention is that Akins never sent the ATF the actual product that was sold to the public. The one he submitted was on a different gun at the time and it didn't work very well. When the ATF later tested the consumer device it wasn't the same thing that they had issued their letter on, and it worked really well, so they felt they had a perfect right to ban it outright, despite the letter. With the Slide Fire I sent them an early prototype, got the go-ahead from them, then sent the completed product when it was ready for the consumer market. They tested the actual stock that you buy and that is what they issued the letter

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on. There are no loopholes here. We followed the rules. If the ATF wants to now come and ban the Slide Fire, they basically have to modify the definition of a machine-gun. The Slide Fire is simply a high quality 33% glass nylon AR stock with no moving parts, period. The only thing firing the gun is you. Nobody can predict what the ATF is going to do about anything, but

continue to the next page



Aaron Hurd, from Akron, got a nice 10 point in Calhoun County.

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from our side we have done everything by the book.”

All we can do from here out is wish Mr. Cottle the best with his invention, and hope that the ATF lets us keep our cool toy. The invention came in the aftermath of three life saving brain surgeries after Mr. Cottle was injured in action during Operation Enduring Freedom. Forced to take some time off from life to recover he found himself back where his grandparents grew up, and with time to go shooting. The idea came from Divine Inspiration says Mr. Cottle, and he had a working prototype within two hours. Two years and 8 revisions made with rapid prototyping and the commercial version of the Slide Fire became a reality. It was officially released earlier this year. Just How Good Is It?

This is the million dollar question of course, and the answer is more detailed that you might imagine. That is our resident US Army Sniper Ben Becker in the video, and it took him about 2 magazines to get

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the gun to run as quickly as you see there. The secret is that you have keep your finger on that rest that is on the other side of the trigger guard. Then you simply push the forend forward. The push motion becomes your trigger and as above, that push can be one shot to a whole magazine with complete control. It's like push, puuush, puuuuuush, puush puush, puuuuuush and the rounds grind out. When you first try it, concentrate on the finger and keeping it down on the rest, as you see in the pictures.

Muzzle climb and accuracy are surprisingly manageable. Mr. Cottle claims that it is because of the

1/2 inch of travel in the stock. It does absorb some recoil, but the thinking is that the body naturally adjusts to the muzzle climb because of the time involved in the travel as well. It sounds like marketing bunk, but Ben and I recently shot a good deal of full auto weapons at range day before SHOT show and we both found that the Slide
 continue to the next page



The Slide Fire stock is pictured below the gun.




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Fire on an AR was at least twice as manageable as a full-auto SCAR, and even the KRISS.

Function and Durability


As you can see from the pictures, the Slide Fire slides onto your standard M4 sliding butt-stock, over the tube that is already on the gun. The company suggests that Mil-Spec tubes are best because the stock will click into the 5th detent, whereas on many consumer ARs it will go into the 6th, which makes it feel not as tight. I forgot to check which detent it fell into on our STAG Arms AR-15 on which we tested. Also, some consumer ARs, most notably Bushmasters, do not have standard thickness tubes and they can fit tight, impairing function. Slide Fire Solutions sells replacement Mil-Spec tubes on their website that will fit any AR for only an extra \$24.95. And it comes with the special wrench you need.

If you have an AR with an A2 type stock, the ones that look like regular rifle stocks and are not adjustable, Slide Fire will soon be selling a kit to convert your AR to the collapsible tube type with everything you need, including wrenches. The kit will I believe sell for only about \$45.

My first question when I first saw the videos on the Slide Fire website was how durable is this thing? It is plastic after all, and there is a whole lot of shakin' goin' on. Mr. Cottle assured me that they had fired 25,000 rounds with the current version with no degradation at all. They have also run them over with trucks, pried them with bars, and they just don't break. At the time of my interview Slide Fire had sold about 3,000 units, and to date none had come back. The small amount of customer service that the devices have required were generally about

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people who shot them too much without cleaning the guns, and the guns jammed. That didn't happen in our STAG. It acted like it was built for the speed.

Lefties, you will be happy to note that there is left handed version of the Slide Fire, and you will need it to fire the device correctly. The finger rest has to be on the other side of the rifle for it to work. STAG is the only maker of lefty ARs and we had hoped to have some lefty video for the article, but the lefty gun didn't get here in time. You'll have to use your imagination.

You will not need a gunsmith to install the SSAR-15 from Slide Fire. It comes with a long Allen

wrench to remove the grip screw (our STAG was a flathead) and the grip slides right off. The only thing continue to the next page



Richard Smith took an 8 point. Photo courtesy of Holbert's Store in Big Bend.

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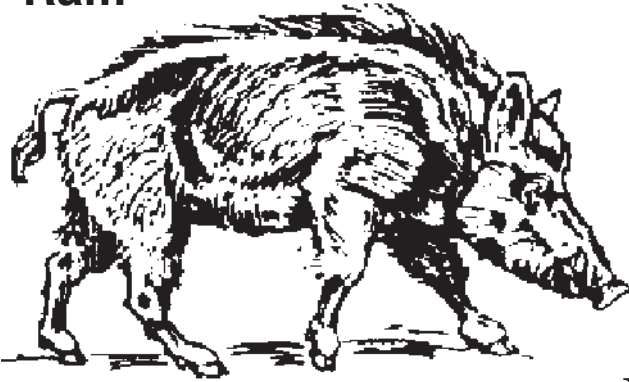
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you have to be careful with is the spring from the safety, which is held in by the grip on an AR. When you remove the grip the spring comes out. The Slide Fire comes with a block that goes over this grip holding rib, and the block holds down the safety spring. Then you just lift the nib that holds your stock in the detent on your AR, slide your stock off the back and slide the SSAR-15 on. It has it's own lever on the bottom that holds the stock in the detent and when turned will also lock the stock stiff.

We only tested the right handed version, and only on a .223/556 AR. It does work on pistol calibers, but it does not work with .22LR conversions or uppers. There just isn't enough recoil in the .22LR to make the gun work properly.

So dust off the reloading press guys and girls. As it says on the

Slide Fire Solutions website, this product is known to cause uncontrollable smiles.



Bobby Mitchell shot a big buck. Photo courtesy of Tri Lakes in Walkersville.



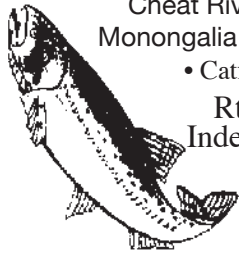
Rick Hopkins shot a 10 point with a muzzleloader. Photo courtesy of Holbert's Store in Big Bend.

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Archery In The Schools

SOUTH CHARLESTON, W.Va.
– The West Virginia Division of Natural Resources (DNR) will be hosting its 7th Annual West Virginia State Archery in the Schools (AIS) Tournament Saturday, March 24, 2012, at the Charleston Civic Center. The DNR anticipates nearly 800 students from across the state will be participating making this the largest indoor youth archery tournament ever held in West Virginia.

The AIS Program is the DNR's largest and fastest growing educational program, reaching more than 60,000 students through the participation of nearly 300 schools.

"Since the DNR implemented the program in 2004, more than 2,000 students have participated in six state tournaments. Several hundred have qualified and competed at the National Tournaments held in Louisville, KY. This year we

had several students participate in the World Tournament in Orlando, FL," according to AIS Program Coordinator Krista Snodgrass of the DNR Wildlife Resources Section.

"With the interest in our state tournament, we're encouraging all participating schools to start working with their students now to get their registration material in before the February 24th deadline," said Snodgrass. "We are encouraging all parents, principals and teachers to actively support their AIS Program and consider coming to this year's tournament. Schools can attend even if they do not have a full team of 12 co-ed students; schools can still be represented by sending students to participate in the Individual Division."

Schools that have trained AIS instructors but have not yet purchased archery equipment still have the



Justin Hutchinson got a big coyote.
Photo courtesy of Jarrett's Bait in Elizabeth.

opportunity to participate in the tournament. "Certified instructors may volunteer to help with the tournament," said Snodgrass. "In fact, it provides instructors first-hand knowledge of what goes on at a tournament, which would be of great benefit to their school.

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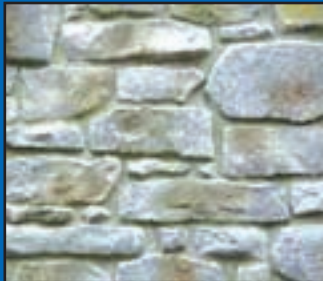
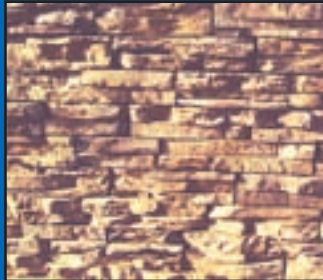
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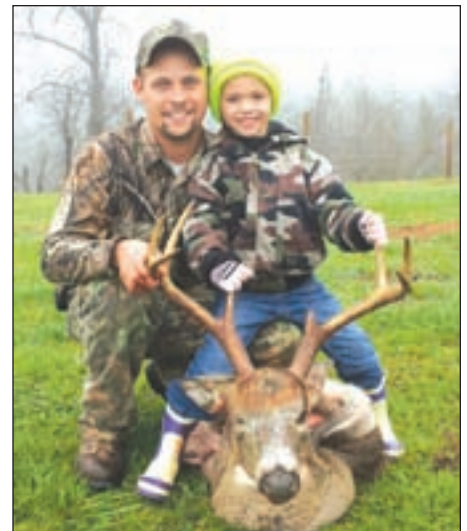
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Billy Murtha shot a massive 12 point buck. Photo courtesy of Cross-roads General Store near Newark.



Sean Cullen took a nice Mason County buck.



Randall Riffle brought in a nice 10 point buck. Photo courtesy of Tri-Lakes in Walkersville.

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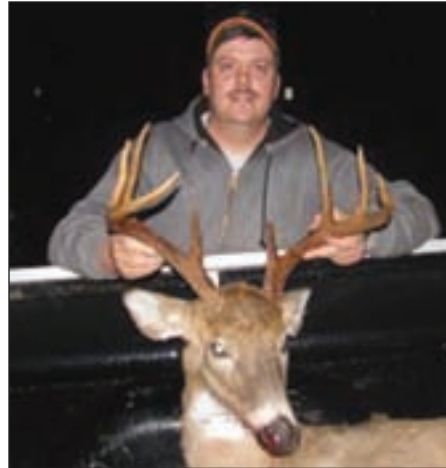
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Johnny Nestor trapped some fox and a coon. Photo courtesy of Middle Mountain Sporting Goods in Elkins.



Doug Cowgill bagged a big buck. Photo courtesy of Middle Mountain Sporting Goods in Elkins.

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Randy Williams shot a 12 point.



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Rick Posey went to a game ranch for this 20 point buck. *Photo courtesy of Mr. Clean Bow Shop (now in Willie's store) in Glenville.*



Young Logan Powell recorded a 5 point buck harvest near Elizabeth.

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Danny Coull, from Parkersburg, took a nice 11 point buck.

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in Louisville, KY. This year we had several students participate in the World Tournament in Orlando, FL," according to AIS Program Coordinator Krista Snodgrass of the DNR Wildlife Resources Section.

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For more information on the AIS State Tournament and how to get your school involved, visit the DNR's website at www.wvdnr.gov/archery or contact Krista Snodgrass at 304-558-2771.



Steve Flowers, from Parkersburg, shot a nice 10 point buck.

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District 3 Office Moves Location

FRENCH CREEK, W.Va. – The W.Va. Division of Natural Resources Law Enforcement Section has moved the District 3 Law Enforcement office to a more central location within the district to better serve the public, according to WVDNR Director Frank Jezioro. DNR District 3 covers eight counties: Clay, Braxton, Nicholas, Pocahontas, Webster, Lewis, Randolph and Upshur.

“For many years, the District 3 Law Enforcement headquarters had been housed in the DNR Elkins Operation Center, putting it at



Logan Highley, from Middlebourne, got his 1st buck - 8 point.

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the far northern end of the district. That made it a four-hour round trip for members of the sporting public from the southern part of the district,” Jezioro said. “By moving the District 3 Law Enforcement offices to French Creek, in offices located at the West Virginia Wildlife Center, District 3 Law Enforcement and Wildlife Section supervisors are in adjacent offices where district operations can be better coordinated. The sporting public will find this to be a more central location within the district and may wish to visit the Wildlife Center’s live animal displays while at the district office conducting business.”

This move became effective on Monday, Feb. 6, 2012. The offices are located 14 miles south of Buckhannon at the intersection of U.S. Route 20 and Alexander Road. The office number is 304-924-6211.



Debbie Boggs, from Looeyville, shot a Roane County buck.

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Season Overview

by Mark A. Garner

The last week of December is always a time of the year when I sort of walk around the house in a controlled funk. Since March, the weeks have been filled with constant activity from the first fishing trip of the year in which I spent the day trying to coax lethargic bass to take a jerk bait on Sutton lake, to the last few minutes of daylight, on the last day of muzzle loading season when I accepted the fact that I was not going to fill my tag this year! It was a great year of fishing and hunting, and quite truthfully, I always feel "lost" for a few weeks after hunting season is over. As I was putting away all of my hunting gear, I reflected upon a exciting hunting season that had several close encounter, and hundreds of hours enjoying the outdoors.

My hunting season began in late September when I purchased a new Bowtech Assassin compound bow from Glady Fork Archery. Due to a accident, my left shoulder required rotator cuff surgery, and af-

ter the lengthy rehab, I found that I had difficulty pulling my old CSS bow back to full draw! I love to bowhunt, so I was searching for a solution, and that solution was a new bow with more let off, and a lower pull weight. The guys at Glady Fork put the Bowtech in my hand, and after a few shots at their range, I was hooked. The Assassin drew back easily, and the arrow speed was amazing!

After a few sessions at my home range, I was consistently shooting 2" groups at 25 yards. What amazed me about this bow was the arrow flight. I was able to use one pin from close range out to 40 yards with little drop!

As the bow season opened, I was eager to see how well the bow responded in a hunting shot. During the rut, a nice buck gave me the opportunity to see just that. I was in the woods a scant 20 minutes when I spotted the buck working his way towards my stand. When the buck gave me a good angle, I drew and placed the pin on his vitals, and released. The Rage broadhead preformed as it was designed, and the buck ran some ten yards and dropped! Another successful hunt was in the books.

Over the years, I have processed quite a few deer, and to be honest, I am not that great of a butcher. Here lately, this little issue is not

longer of concern due to my uncle John, a retired electrician started a small business called Garners Outback, and he does a fantastic job at
continue to the next page



Andy Watson brought in a good buck. *Photo courtesy of Tri Lakes in Walkersville.*

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processing all types of wild game. This year, I had all my deer processed into jerky, and boloney. His daughter, Tammy does the specialties, and if you like jerky, I don't think you will be disappointed with her work!

With bow season done, I set my sights on the upcoming gun season. With a new gun purchase from Jerry's Sporting Goods in Horner, I was eager to see how the Weatherly .257 Magnum would handle a deer. Over the past ten years, I alternated between a Winchester 300 Magnum, and a Remington 7mm magnum, and while both guns had no problem taking deer, the problem was that they did too good of a job!

That is the reason for the purchase, and at the range, I was very pleased with the flight of the bullet. Based upon what I witnessed in shooting the gun, I was optimistic that the caliber would be perfect for deer, and antelope sized game. Anyway, while I had multiple opportunities to connect with nice bucks during the two week season,

in the end, I did not fill a tag! One nice 9 point buck at Stonewall gave me two chances to take him, but on both cases, the buck just did not give me a good shot, so I passed on the opportunities. I'd rather pass on a deer than take a chance on wounding a animal, hence, he will hopefully be there next year.

In muzzle loading season, again, this was the case! Over the season, I saw three different bucks that I would like to have taken, but as luck would have it, I never had a clean shot, so once again, I did not punch a tag, but in the end, fate is a funny thing. In my mind, had it been in the cards, things might have worked out differently, but for myself, part of the allure of hunting is the experiences you have while hunting.

At this point in the game, the taking of an animal, while the goal, is not nearly as important to me as the actual hunt itself. One of the best times I had this fall was spending over an hour stalking two bucks that were out in a field at Stonewall Jackson. I spotted the two

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GAME CHECKING



bucks, and worked my way downwind, and slowly stalked them step by step. I finally got to within 60 yards, still out of bow range, but close enough to see them blink!

continue to the next page

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A squirrel started barking at me, and that was all the bucks needed to put them on alert, and the gig was up. But what a hunt! Also, I can vividly remember the first buck I took when I was 14 years old. I can remember the excitement that I felt once I knew that I was going to shoot, and the feeling that I had after the shot as the deer lay prone on the leaves. That is a day I will always cherish. Also, I usually like to end my articles with a uplifting piece on a young hunter, or something that stands out. Like myself, some thirty plus years ago, another young hunter harvested his first buck this year as his mother sat beside him!

The hunter was Tre Roach, age 14 of Harrison County. Tre took a nice 8 point buck on the first Tuesday of the season, and his mother, Tammy watched the entire hunt unfold. As she tells the story, they were sitting in a stand when Tre spotted the buck. They both whispered to each other, and his mother said, "go ahead and shoot it"! Tre took aim, and shot. The buck dropped, and a memory was created. Great job Tre! Now think about it, how many moms would sit in the rain for two days to hunt with her son? Well, she did, and that is one day they will always have fond memo-



Mark Banks, from Columbia, shot a good Mason County buck.

ries of! That is what hunting is all about!

I hope your hunting season created some fond memories. By the looks of the initial DNR reports, hunters not only harvested a increase in bucks from the previous season, but they also reported that

the quality of the bucks were better as well. I hope everyone makes it though the next several months until the weather gets nicer, but in the meantime, maybe I'll get back into grouse hunting, or perhaps rabbit! I can assure you that I will be out, and about somewhere in the wilds of West Virginia.



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